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OXFORD HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Christianity in India
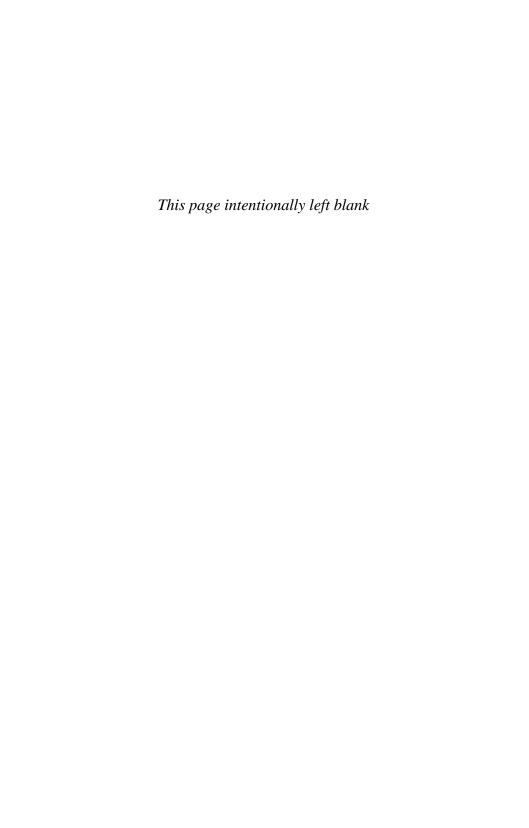
From Beginnings to the Present

ROBERT ERIC FRYKENBERG

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Edited by
Henry and Owen Chadwick

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PREFACE

> The religion of Christ is one of the most dynamic factors in the world.
> It always bursts its boundaries, however strong and rigid those bound-
> aries may be. It refuses to be confined to any one race, class, or caste. It
> seeks to embrace all.
>
> (Vedanayagam Azariah, Bishop of Dornakal, 1932)

Christianity has always been, in its inherent nature and especially in its
expansive phases, transcultural and migratory. Its bent, as manifest in its
historical and universal claims, has been to change with each wave of
expansion. From its initial cultural matrix in Jerusalem, each successive set
of interactions—with cultures of the Graeco-Roman (Mediterranean)
world, with Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic Europe, as also with cultures of
Persia, India, and China—has led to alterations within Christian culture
itself. Modern interactions between Western and non-Western forms of
Christianity have brought further mutations: with distinctive nuancing of
ceremonials and doctrines, institutions and ideals, qualities and styles. Many
of the manifold variations in the content and culture of Christianity,
especially in localized forms, have yet to be fully or properly studied,
much less better understood.

This study seeks to explore and enhance historical understandings of
Christian communities, cultures, and institutions within the Indic world
from their beginnings down to the present. As one out of several manifest-
ations of a newly emerging world Christianity, in which Christians of a
post-Christian West are a minority, it has focused upon those transcultural
interactions within Hindu and Muslim environments which have made
Christians in this part of the world distinctive. It seeks to uncover various
complexities in the proliferation of Christianity in its many forms and to
examine processes by which Christian elements intermingled with indigen-
ous cultures and which resulted in dual identities, and also left imprints upon
various cultures of India. Belief that the Apostle Thomas came to India in
AD 52, and that he left seven congregations to carry on the mission of
bringing the Gospel to India, is a hallowed part of the canon among all
Thomas Christians. In our day the impulse of this mission is more alive than
ever. With the rise of Pentecostalism, the fourth great wave of Christian

expansion in India has occurred, so that there are now ten to fifteen times more missionaries than ever before in India's history. Movements to form such committed and devout volunteers began about a century ago, with the formation of the Indian Missionary Society and the National Missionary Society, under the leadership of Vedanayagam Azariah.

This work aims to provide a comprehensive and fresh understanding of the history of Christians, Christian communities, and Christian institutions within the 'Indic' world. It is an attempt to do this by means of an approach which is at once 'Indocentric', integrative, and contextual—something which has hitherto never before been accomplished within a single volume. Such an approach must draw upon many previous research efforts which have focused upon the particular cultures of Christianity within various indigenous, *Indic*, or 'Indian' frames of reference. Christianity within the Indic world (encompassing both the Indian subcontinent and the 'further India' of South-East Asia[1]) is not, and can never properly be seen as, simply something alien to the cultures and societies within which it is found; something implanted, or somehow imposed, by foreigners. In this approach, two further perspectives need to be balanced: one has to do with the character, nature, place, or role of Christianity within that world, especially in its influence and its authority among the various indigenous cultures, peoples, and societies of the subcontinent and beyond; another has to do with the character, nature, place, and role of many indigenous cultures, peoples, and societies in their influence and sway upon the nature of Christianity and upon Indo–Christian communities. Each of these perspectives raises questions concerning: (1) what 'indigenous' ('Hindu', Islamic, Buddhist, or other) cultural components have, at one time or another, resided within various forms of local Christian culture within these regions; (2) what features have made Indian or Indic Christianity and various Christian cultures what they are, for example, within what is called 'the Church', distinct from Christian cultures elsewhere; (3) why Christian communities in India have consistently failed to reach out beyond the bonds and bounds of birth and blood to embrace, encapsulate, and enclose believers who come from 'polluting' lineages; and, finally (4) what elements within Indian Christian cultures have made, may yet be making, or may never be able to make contributions to the formation of an entirely new or different kind of truly 'universal' ('catholic') or world Christianity.

The size of India's Christian population today is a highly sensitive subject. By itself, it is now estimated as surpassing entire populations of every

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[1] Including mainlands of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia, and islands of Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

country of Western Europe except Germany. This population in 2005, according to the World Christian Database, was 68.189 million. As such, India has the seventh largest Christian population in the world—after the USA (252 million), Brazil (166.8 million), Mexico (102 million), China (101.9 million), Russia (84.4 million), and Philippines (73.9 million).[2] While these figures may be open to challenge, especially by the heavily politicized Census of India, the fact remains that Christianity in India, with high and increasing literacy even among its poorest adherents, now commands a position of influence that can be neither denied nor ignored.

That being said, the historian is faced with the fact that Christianity in India is anything but a single whole or a monolithic entity. A critic might well argue, with strong justification, that this volume is mislabelled—that this is really a history about many separate Christianities, rather than about one. The extreme complexity and multiplicity baffles and challenges any effort to draw together a neat synthesis of understandings. At the same time, since Christianity in India is far from being the alien implant or 'colonial' holdover that some of its foes solemnly aver, there are grounds for considering exactly how this is not true. Christianity within India is 'Indian'. But, while it is indigenous in some localistic or particularistic sense, yet for the most part, even the various forms that may be seen as very indigenous are not manifestations that may be called 'Indian' in any comprehensive or all-India sense. Writing about Christians *in* India or about Christianity *in* India is not the same as writing about Christians *of* India, 'Indian Christians', or 'Indian Christianity'. So many and varied are the different Christian communities that the historian is faced with seemingly limitless sets of difficulties and dilemmas in defining the contours of particular phenomena that can be fitted within the broader concept.

As will also be seen in the chapters that follow, therefore, more often than not Christians within India can be seen as being rooted within the history of distinct ethnic communities, each different from the next. These are distinct peoples that have not or do not, as a rule, intermarry or even interdine outside of their own community, and often do not share many common memories or traditions. 'Caste' is the catch-all concept that has long been used to capture what is a uniquely indigenous, if not Indic (or Sanskritic) legacy, in this particularistic sense. 'Birth', in Sanskrit, is *jāt*; and *jāti*, the Sanskritic term for 'caste', its most precise or accurate indigenous

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[2] Data acquired here, from the *World Christian Database* (Boston: Brill, 2007) and website http://worldchristiandatabase.org, comes from a reliable and sober Center for the Study of Global Christianity, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Admittedly, there is much boosterism in promotional statistics put out by some Christian organizations these days; and admittedly, some scepticism is always in order. Nevertheless, this research institute indicates that the percentage of Christians in India has risen to 6.7, from 2.7 in 1995.

equivalent. Wherever one turns, there seems to be no escaping this phe-nomenon or its consequences. It lies at the very bedrock of an entire civilization and all its manifold cultures, and subcultures. The result, for Christians, has almost always been that they have tended to carry 'dual identities' or have become manifested as possessing 'hybridized' cultural features; moreover, since all ethnicities are ranked, by degrees, into respect-able and non-respectable, or polluting, categories or *varnas* (or 'colours'), various Christian communities are also fitted into some category and ranked, whether they like it or not. In this respect, Christianity in India merely reflects the entire country and its multiplex antiquities and leg-acies—which are very difficult to escape.

Nowhere in the world today are existing non-Western forms of Chris-tianity older or more complex than in India. (Some Thomas Christians like to tell anyone, especially Catholics, that there is as much evidence that the Apostle came to Malabar as that Peter came to Rome.) Nowhere did 'modern' missionary movements begin any earlier; and nowhere have they lasted any longer. (Nepal, along with many aboriginal or tribal (*adivāsi*) areas, is currently in the process of responding to fresh missionary initiatives.) Nowhere have Christian missions become larger, stronger, or more highly developed. Yet, at the same time, nowhere have indigenous institutions, cultures, and leadership entered into the dynamics of Christian expansion more deeply or in greater measure. Nowhere are there some Christian institutions that are in greater disarray. Nowhere, at the same time, has cultural, social, and political opposition or resistance to Christianity become more pervasive, powerful, or subtle; and nowhere today are threats to the very Christian survival more serious. (Scarcely a week passes without some church building being destroyed or some Christians being killed.)

This study on occasion may depart from conventional paradigms and usages. In doing so, it may break a few stereotypes, especially when loosely and mindlessly entrenched in our vocabulary. These, when applied to India, may not accurately reflect what India is or how India has been represented. In departing from convention, the reader is encouraged to consider distinc-tions that have not always been clearly spelled out in many works on India, much less in works on Christians and Christianity in India. Conceptual paradigms that need clarification cover a wide range, grappling with our ways of defining geographic categories and contexts, and then proceeding to a reframing of socio-cultural and to theological and biblical frames of reference. The whole purpose of resorting to somewhat different usages is to remind those who ponder such things that our conceptual frameworks and paradigms are far from immutable and, upon occasion, need critical revision. This can be uncomfortable.

To begin with, the term 'continent', as well as the more conventional 'subcontinent', finds lodging within these pages. When the terms Africa, Asia, and Europa were first used by the Greeks, they were concepts connected with the littoral of the Mediterranean. Later, as what we call 'continents' expanded these three primary concepts, the original terms became modified or qualified into 'Africa-minor', 'Asia-minor' (or Anatolia), and 'Europa-minor'. The trouble with the way these elastic concepts have developed lies in the fact that, within the greater island of the earth (Africa, Asia, and Europe), the continent of Europe, especially Western Europe, stopped expanding while the other two did not. More than Africa, which is neatly defined by surrounding oceans, Asia as a concept has become a monstrosity—in a number of ways. In terms of both size and of discreteness of both physical and cultural features, India is as much a continental projection of the Eurasian land mass as is either China or Europe. Europe or China might have been designated, just as arbitrarily or validly, as 'subcontinents' of a Greater Eurasia. That they are not, or were not, in no way nullifies the fact that 'Greater India' or South Asia is more completely cut off by walls of mountains and moats of oceans and that it is a discrete continent—a gigantic entity entirely distinct from other geographical parts of our planet. For some, pointing out such slippery distinctions may not matter, and may be seen as unnecessary. For others, such slippery concepts are confusing.

On the level of cultural nomenclature also, this study attempts to make some departures that, while not unique, need to be explained. From a Sanskritic frame of reference, this is a *jāti*-or *varna*-centred study. That is, this is a study that focuses attention on particular kinds of 'birth' and on horizontal categories or 'colours' (*varna*)—strata of socio-cultural status that range from white or pure to red, yellow, and black—and, particularly, on 'colourless' (*āvarna*) or polluting, and hence polluting or 'untouchable' peoples. The 'lowest' stratum is broken into a number of substrata. Below and beyond these strata are aboriginal peoples (*adivāsis*)—peoples who never fell under the shadow of either *Sanskriti* or Islamic civilizations and who retained a large measure of autonomy, albeit often within wilderness places, beyond the reach of cultural or political domination. Those aboriginal peoples who came under the sway of culturally 'higher' and politically powerful societies became the polluted (*āvarna*) dregs of that society, and were subject to bondage and exclusion. They became what are now called *Dalits*. All peoples within their various stratified levels or categories of purity were themselves broken into endogamous 'births' or 'castes' (*jātis*)—people who protected their ritual purity by refusing to intermarry or interdine with people not born within their own distinct community.

Each of these communities has had its own 'story', 'history', lineage legends (*vamshvālis*), and understandings of the past. Each, in turn, contests the so-called 'master narratives' which, down through the centuries, have been promulgated by the Brahmanical guardians of *Sanskriti* culture and civilization. Indeed, as such scholars as Michael Bergunder and Romila Thapar have shown, contested reconstructions of the past have, in recent years, become a growth industry. Such efforts, as politicized by Hindutva forces of the Sangh Parivar, led to an effort by the BJP-led Government of India to rewrite the entire prehistory of India. Challenges against such efforts have come not only from predictable champions of secular nationalism on the left, but also from anti-Brahman forces and from communities, such as those who now call themselves *Dalits*, that have for so long been marginalized from public life.[3]

Once Europeans arrived on the scene, at the end of the sixteenth century, the term 'Frank' was taken from prevailing usages in the Middle East and applied to them. But, in the process, linguistic modifications and transliterations transformed the terms into something indigenous. In all of South Asia, people have had difficulty pronouncing or distinguishing an 'f' and a 'p'—sometimes confusing or blending them together when, for example, pronouncing the first letter of the word 'Frank'. Thus, in the south particularly, the word came to be pronounced and spelled 'Parangi' or 'Pfarangi', while in the north the word was pronounced and translated as 'Farangi'—the first usage coming from Tamil and Telugu and the second usage more commonly found in Persian, Urdu, or Hindi pronunciations. Within this volume, for the most part, *Pfarangi*, or 'European' will be used more often.

On yet another level, from an Indocentric perspective, our concepts need to shed their Western (European and American) baggage. Within this study, the three main branches or categories of Christians and Christianity are Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical/aka Protestant. Orthodox Christians, often also known as 'Syrian' Christians, mainly because of their use of Syriac as the language of ritual and Scripture, are commonly referred to as 'Thomas' Christians—Christians who trace their spiritual and theological, as well as cultural and ecclesiastical, lineage back to the Apostle Thomas, and to peoples of later centuries who identified themselves as such. Catholic Christians are Roman Catholics who began to proliferate, in several forms,

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[3] Michael Bergunder, 'Anti-Brahmanical and Hindu Nationalist Reconstructions of Indian Prehistory', *Historiographical Linguistica*, 31: 1 (2004), 59–104; previously published in Michael Bergunder and Rahul Peter (eds.), *'Arier' und 'Draviden': Konstruktionen der Vergangenheit als Grundlage für Selbst- und Fremdwahrnehmungen Südasiens* (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2002). Romila Thapar, 'Knowledge and Education', *Frontline*, 22: 2 (15–28 Jan. 2005).

from the sixteenth century onwards and Latin-rite Thomas Christians who, whether by coercion or co-option, became subject to Rome.

Within this volume, the term 'Evangelical'[4] is applied to all Christians who, in their doctrines and ecclesiology, were and are neither Orthodox nor Catholic. The reason for using this term rather than the more Anglican term 'Protestant' lies in the history of India's own Christians and their legacies. The first such non-Orthodox and non-Catholic Christians in India described themselves as 'Evangelische'. The roots for applying this designation to Christian communities in India who were neither Syrian/Thomas nor Roman Catholic lay in northern Germany. 'Protestant', as an historical concept, was not much used until later, coming from the spiritual and ecclesiastical lineage of Henry VIII and of Anglicanism. While Luther certainly 'protested' against Rome, it was the English who, for the most part, appropriated the term 'Protestant' and applied it mainly to non-Catholic and non-Orthodox Christians. Viewed from an Indian rather than a European or 'colonial' perspective, the term 'Protestant' is Anglo-centric and Eurocentric. Hence, its use in India often tends to be imprecise or inappropriate. Against whom were non-Catholic Indian Christians 'protesting'? While the most vehement protesters, from the sixteenth century onwards, were the Thomas Christians themselves, they did not apply this term to themselves. Thus, not until Anglican 'colonialism' itself became ascendant was the designation 'Evangelical' (arising from the German *Evangelische*) challenged. From historical as well as from biblical and evangelizing impulses, the more generic, pre-twentieth-century use of the concept 'Evangelical' (as also denoting the concept 'Protestant') may well be more accurate. Yet, in order to avoid confusion, deference to common usage obliges one to also use the technically less accurate designation 'Protestant' in later chapters of this work.

The question of whether to use contemporary spellings of names, whether of persons or of places, rather than those used during the periods with which this book deals, has no easy or simple answer. Thus, readers need to be aware of the fact that Madras and Chennai relate to roughly the same place—both terms springing from original names of adjacent coastal port-villages Madraspatnam and Chennaipatnam. Even more confusing, the same place was also referred to by the East India Company as Fort St George, the armed citadel that lay within eyesight of the Catholic cathedral of San Thome, not far from St Thomas Mount nor from the ancient Brahman centre of Mylapore or Mailapur. Similar variations can be found in Bombay now being spelled Mumbai, Calcutta being Kolkatta,

[4] The root of this term lies in various forms of the Greek: εὐαγγελίζω or εὐαγγελικός: εὐ = 'good' and ἀγγελικός or 'bringing tidings' = hence, 'good-tiding bringing'.

Tinnevelly being Tirunelveli, Tanjore being Thanjavur, and a host of similar instances. The hobgoblin of consistency, in this respect, becomes elusive and should not be expected.

Likewise, diacritical markings have been used sparingly, if at all (for instance, in the body of the text they have not been used on the words and names *Dalīt*, *saṃsāra*, *metrān*, Tirunelvēli, Thanjāvur, *Ṣudra*). Wherever convenient or possible, *italics* are used, at least initially, to signal the application of an indigenous concept. The purpose of this writer has been to make this treatment of the subject as 'reader-friendly' as possible. To that end, footnotes and an index, within which a glossary has been embedded, are provided so as to facilitate comprehension and points of reference related thereto.

Only in the Bibliography itself will the reader find a fuller citation or a fuller collection of works touching upon almost every kind of topic that might impinge upon our understandings of India's Christians and of Christianity in India. But, within the contents of any given chapter, understandings of India and its history remain forever contingent and provisional. There may always be yet another source to be found that might overturn previous understandings. There may also, by the same token, be fresh insights and ways of interpreting the data that have never before been applied. The sheer speed and volume of information technology in our day has opened up access to ever more troves of data and ever new methodologies for handling masses of new information. The conscientious historian faces these circumstances with a mixture of humility and scepticism—never fully accepting what has been learned and ever ready to learn more, even if new discoveries may turn previous understandings upside down.

The story of how the writing of this book evolved began almost fifty years ago. While working on the enormous troves of untouched records within the India Office Library, uncovering the remarkable power of local societies to influence if not even resist the authority of the Indian Empire under the Raj of the East India Company, I found myself confronting a mounting number of documents showing how indigenous Christians also resisted imperial domination or resisted dominant elites. The memory of these documents, and notes about them, were part of the desiderata remaining after *Guntur District, 1788–1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India* (Oxford, 1965) was published. Gradually, during the years that followed when many other interests consumed time and energy, materials of many kinds were collected, starting with the microfilming of all CMS records for South India. Work on the 'construction' or 'invention' of modern Hinduism, and missionary influences that underlay it,

increasingly drove me back to this subject. My remarkable mentors, the late Percival Spear and Kenneth Ballhatchet, during all the decades that I benefited from their insights, shared this interest and gave me encouragement. While still at UC-Berkeley, in 1957–8, Spear heard me relate details about indigenously composed singing of *kirtanas* and the telling of stories of village Christians of Telengana and, in the decades that followed, he encouraged further work on Indian Christianity. Ballhatchet did the same, especially in the years after his conversion to Catholicism and while he was working on the history of Catholicism in India. R. Pierce Beaver, while giving lectures during my year at the University of Chicago in 1961–2, opened intellectual windows and showed what might be done. I cannot begin to recount the many other similar encouragements that followed, as I began to do more serious work on this subject.

Several interlocking, partially sequential, and partially simultaneous events conspired, so to speak, in pulling and pushing me into this project. This process occurred even as other research demands and pressures at the university, along with tasks of guiding a wide variety of doctoral dissertations, required work that moved in other directions.

First, Joel Carpenter, now at Calvin College, invited me to give a lecture/paper at Wheaton College, then asked me to participate in a conference he was organizing, and then urged me to make an exhaustive survey of work on the history of world Christianity and missions recently or currently being conducted. At the Wheaton Conference I met Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh. All three scholars encouraged me to write more on the history of Christianity in India.

Second, shortly after the death of her mentor, Bishop Stephen Neil, Susan Billington Harper asked for help relating to her work on Bishop Vedanayagam Azariah. Her request threw open other windows of inspiration and opportunity that led to my becoming a guest at the Woodrow Wilson Center in 1986, to do further work on fundamentalist movements in India.

Third, while at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 1992, Lamin Sanneh invited me to give a paper at the first Yale–Edinburgh (Y–E Group) Conference on Christian Missions, an event from which several further projects flowed. This Conference, which oscillates annually between Yale and Edinburgh, has provided a heady mixture of intellectual encouragement, inspiration, and opportunity, not to mention a constant process of learning about various currents of world Christianity.

Fourth, while at the first Y–E Conference in 1992, Gerald H. Anderson of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, just across the street from Yale Divinity School, invited me to join the Advisory Committee of the Pew (Religions) Research Enablement Program (REP). This programme was

just being launched for the purpose of helping junior and senior scholars to carry out research projects on Christianity and Christian missions all over the world. The privilege of being part of that programme, which funded up to thirty or more research projects every year for seven years and which enabled me to read many times that number of research proposals, was a mind-expanding event in itself.

Fifth, this programme in turn led, during the years between 1994 and 1999, to the privilege of directing a Research Advancement Project (RAP) funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts that concentrated entirely on the history of Christianity within Hindu–Muslim environments. This project, by enabling the various research conferences, translations, and publications that focused exclusively on India, made it possible to become better acquainted with work being done by dozens of India's gifted Christian scholars. Noteworthy has been the influence of such historians and scholars as Daniel Jeyaraj, David and Sarojini Packiamuthu, Arthur Jeykumar, Vincent Kumardoss and Susan Alexander, Thomas Anchukananam, Atul Aghamkar, F. Hrangkhuma, George Oomen, Joseph Muthuraj, C. V. Matthew, and many more than can be named. Over the years during and since this project was launched, special insights were also gained by studying the work of such other senior figures as A. Mathias Mundadan, J. T. K. Daniel, M. M. David, Ashish Chrispal, and Wilfred Felix. Just to mention such names is to be unfair to scores of others without whose contributions, however small or great, many insights would not have been gained.

A sixth process was no less influential. This began when I was asked to join the North Atlantic Missions Project (NAMP). Also funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, this project was headed by Brian Stanley, Director of the Henry Martyn Centre, in collaboration with scholars based in the Centre for Advanced Religions and Theological Studies at the University of Cambridge. This later morphed into the Currents in World Christianity Project (CWC). Together these two projects, really one elongated venture that lasted from 1996 to 2001, organized a series of annual international conferences, consultations, and symposia in different parts of the world, as well as ongoing seminars in several universities. A residue of over 155 scholarly papers—100 unpublished position papers and 55 published papers—were compiled by Liesel Amos, the Administrator of NAMP/CWC projects and made available on a CD-ROM disc. The culminating symposium, wrapping up all of these Pew-supported projects, was held in Hammanskraal, some fifty miles outside Pretoria, in July of 2001.

Meanwhile, a seventh, and parallel, event was in progress. In collaboration with Richard Fox Young and Geoffrey A. Oddie, I convened sessions at three meetings of the European Conference of Modern South Asian Studies—on the outskirts of Berlin in September 1992, at Copenhagen in

August 1996, and in Prague in September 1998. At these events, papers focusing upon various aspects of Christianity and Christian missions in South Asia were discussed at considerable length. Many excellent papers that were presented, thirteen of which were culled out and, together with two invited papers, were blended to make the collection of essays entitled *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500* (published in 2003). By 2003, a companion volume had already appeared. This was the result of papers presented at a conference at Balliol College, Oxford, in September 1999 that were organized and edited in collaboration with Judith M. Brown. Her insights, which have inspired me down through the years, introduced *Christians, Cultural Interactions, and India's Religious Traditions* (2002). There is hardly a single scholar whose essay appeared within these two volumes that did not make some invaluable contributions to the study of the history of Christianity in India and to whom I do not owe an enormous debt of gratitude. Among such scholars, in addition to names already mentioned above, were Peter B. Andersen, Michael Bergunder, Richard Bingle, Marine Carrin and Harald Tambs-Lyche, Penelope Carson, Gunnel Cederlöf, Susan Billington Harper, Bengt Karlsson, Eleanor Jackson, Heike Liebau, Iwona Milewska, Indira Viswanathan Peterson, Avril Powell, Paula Richman, Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, Will Sweetman, and John C. B. Webster.

Throughout much of the 1990s, and ever since, I received help and inspiration from Chandra S. Mallampalli. The only one of some fifty doctoral students it was my privilege to guide to take up the study of Christianity in India, he served as administrative assistant to this project for several years. Both he and I benefited from logistic help in India provided by Roger E. Hedlund, whose facilities at 55 Luz Avenue, Mylapore, often became a focal point for consultations and whose own work served to provide a point of reference. Similar help was provided by Graham Houghton, especially as his fledgling South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies rapidly grew in size and stature on the outskirts of Bangalore. Many more colleagues deserve mention but may well have been overlooked. Without the work of so many of such scholars and administrators, both within India and outside of India—many of whose scholarly legacies are found within the Bibliography of this book—this study could not have been completed. Truly we as scholars stand on the shoulders of our mentors and colleagues, not only of current and bygone generations, but also of those who are still working—many of them still tunnelling deeply into archival materials and many still at work on the coal face of these mines.

An eighth and final development to occur at about the same time as all of these others was especially fortuitous. It began when an invitation came to

me from Peter Robb, then Chair of History at my old alma mater, the School of Oriental and African Studies. He wanted me to meet Malcolm Campbell, the then editor and owner of Curzon Press. Campbell asked me to become the general editor of a series that he wanted to entitle Studies in the History of Christian Missions. With all of the other demands that then surrounded me, I faced a dilemma. The offer, with the opportunities for potential future publication in this field, was so attractive that I was loath to turn it down. Yet, beset as I was, I also could not accept. Over a weekend—in the summer of 1996—I came to the conclusion that what would be ideal would be for Brian Stanley to join me as co-general editor of this series. Brian and I also soon realized that we needed a publisher who could reach the American market. To that end, we asked Bill Eerdmans if he would join in this venture. While interested, he was cautious about entering into a joint-publishing partnership with Curzon Press. In the end, not without misgivings, an agreement was made—over lunch in Cambridge with William Eerdmans, Jonathan Price (for Curzon), Brian, and myself. While the agreement did not last very long after Campbell sold Curzon to Taylor & Francis (Routledge), in one way or another the series has succeeded—with fifteen volumes out, and several more at various stages of production. The debt of gratitude which we owe to Bill Eerdmans for helping to make this project run so smoothly is incalculable. This venture too has been part of what has made the current study possible. The privilege of working with, and benefiting from, Brian Stanley has been inestimable. I know of no one today whose mind is sharper and whose spirit had inspired more of my respect. Not surprisingly, therefore, his own *chela*, or *sishiya*, Sebastian Kim, like my *sishiya*, Chandra Mallampalli, has also won my admiration and respect. The future of this field lies with these younger scholars.

Finally, this preface would not be complete without indicating that the writing of this work, as a consequence, has been a humbling experience. So much has been learned. So much is being learned. So much still remains to be learned. And, most humbling of all, so many important understandings, both useful and worthy, have had to be left out. Historians well appreciate the fact that all their understandings forever remain incomplete. Their conclusions, often called findings, have had to be contingent upon what might yet be discovered. That humility is part of the essential equipment of a historian, whether practising or professional, is hardly surprising. Proper humility, in such circumstances, is also often and inescapably mingled, as it must be, with heavy doses of scepticism. This too is less than surprising. Much about the validity of what historians have uncovered so often seems to rest upon rather flimsy or fragile evidence. Yet, when faced with the alternatives—attempting nothing is a counsel of despair—those who write
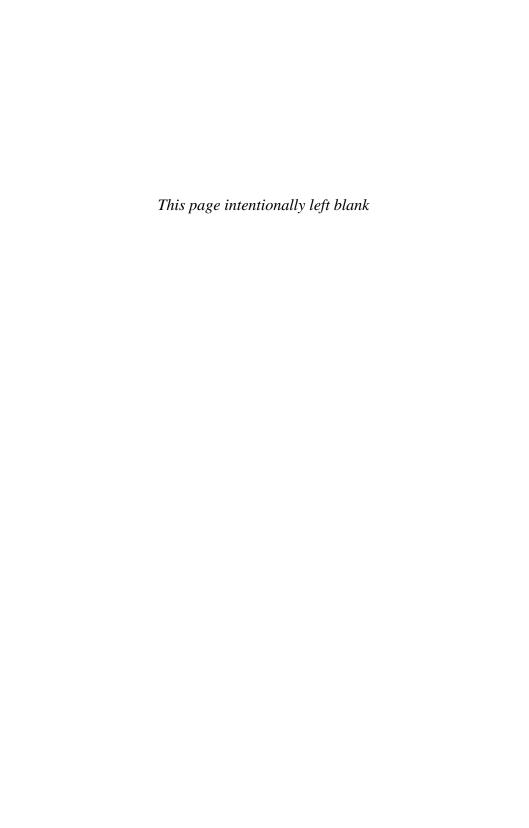
history take the plunge. They sink down deep into dark and swirling waters of inadequate, conflicting, or confusing source materials, attempting to rise and to stay afloat. The longer I have tried to swim in such waters the more overwhelming these have sometimes seemed. The foundations of historical understandings are matters that I have never ceased to ponder.[5]

Of all to whom I owe a deep debt of gratitude, to none is this so great as that which belongs to my dearly beloved wife Carol, the person with whom I have shared fifty-five years. She is the one who, in many ways, has borne the heavier burden, the one who has waited for endless hours, days, weeks, months, and years for this work to be completed. Who can measure the amount of anguish and loneliness that one's helpmeet must go through in such circumstances or the amount of courage or steadfastness that is required for work like this to be completed? It is to her that this work is dedicated, as also to the memory of all those saints of India whose lives, down through the ages, made such a work as this possible.

R.E.F.

Madison, Wisconsin
1 June 2008

[5] Robert Eric Frykenberg, *History and Belief: The Foundations of Historical Understanding* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996).

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CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(*Plates appear between pages 288 and 289*)

Map 1. Ancient Near East and Indian continent

Map 2. Malabar coast and mountain hinterland

Map 3. Mughal India (*c*.1600–1750)

Map 4. Southern India (*c.*1750–1857)

Map 5. Tirunelveli country (*c*.1770–1900)

Map 6. The Indian Empire (*c*.1858–1947)

Map 7. Contemporary India (*c*.1947–2008)

Map 8. North-eastern India

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I

INTRODUCTION:
CHRISTIANS, CHRISTIANITY,
AND CHRISTENDOM

One catches an elephant with an elephant, and a quail with a quail.
(Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar)[1]

It is important to frequently be reminded that the long westward movement from Antioch by which peoples of Europe gradually became Christian was far from complete as late as 1500; and also that, in the ante-Nicene centuries, a no less significant eastward movement was carrying Christian faith to peoples of Persia, India, and China, as also to peoples of Africa.

The original imperative and dynamic impulse of the Gospel James Kurth labelled 'one of the most profound revolutions the world has ever known'.[2] This was never, even from its earliest infancy, something optional. Commands of the Great Commission and Pentecost—'Make disciples of all nations' (Matt.28:19); 'Go forth to every part of the world and proclaim the Good News [Gospel] to the whole of creation!' (Mark 16: 15); 'You shall be witnesses of me . . . to the ends of the earth!' (Acts 1: 8)—were, from the very outset, mandatory. They applied to all followers of Jesus. The Good News, for this reason, possessed qualities that were also intrinsically disruptive and revolutionary. For many, the world would be turned upside down. Old ways of doing things would never again be quite the same. New ways would disturb, if not threaten, the world that had been, that was, and that would be. The very safety and security, if not the very identity, of each people that the Gospel touched, would be challenged and altered. The ideology of the Gospel was, by its very nature, expansive, trans-cultural, and globalizing. Yet, its spiritual and universalizing claims also required flesh and blood—incarnation—concrete expression in the particularities of

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[1] 'Twelve Arguments of the Divine Songsters' [*Jñānappāttaja Pannirujñāyam*], in D. Dennis Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India: Tamil Evangelical Christians, 1706–1835* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2000), 155.

[2] 'Religion and Globalization', Foreign Policy Research Institute WIRE (28 May 1999), 7: 7 [The 1998 Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs]. Email address: fpri@aol.com [*Orbis* 42: 2 (Sp.)].

each ethno-local culture. In other words, the Gospel could never function merely as an abstraction, but had to become realized in earthly manifestation, in one way or another. For the message to be otherwise, as if it were merely disembodied or other-worldly, would be a contradiction in terms. That being so, the very nature of the Gospel itself became altered and remoulded with each successive wave of expansion without contradicting itself or departing from what became the sacred canon or established Scripture.[3]

Initial Expansions across the World

What was 'turned' or 'transformed'—what was 'converted'—through the agency of the eternal 'Word of God', as also conveyed in the Gospel message, never could occur without its also sinking roots deep into the cultural soil, not only of an individual soul, but also of some one particular living society, in some one specific and particular place, and at some specific and particular 'time on earth'. Within a mere half-century, the initial matrix of Jerusalem was profoundly altered—if not buried, crushed, and ultimately destroyed—when the city fell in AD 70. Subsequent interactions with cultures of the Graeco-Roman world were followed, in due course and over many centuries, by encounters with Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic peoples—and meanwhile, further east, by encounters with peoples and cultures of Mesopotamia, Armenia, Ethiopia, India, Persia, and China. Each and every encounter led to local challenges, and resulted in a further metamorphosing of a local manifestation of the Gospel. Later, during medieval times, further expansions of the Gospel brought still further unexpected and unforeseeable mutations: within distinctive ceremonials and cultures, creeds and doctrines, institutions and ideals, languages and literatures, qualities and styles of artistic expression, and of social life itself. Consequent variations in content brought other localized forms of Gospel embodiment, as its truths were themselves translated and reincarnated within new languages. (Many of such transformations have yet to be fully studied or properly understood. Some are probably beyond historical recovery.)

By the time of the Islamic Hejra in AD 622, therefore, the Gospel in India was far from new. Its history was already several centuries old. Long before Islamic arrivals in India, its character was already changing. Periods of apparent dormancy and quiescence—and even of seeming hibernation—can

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[3] Controversies engendered by higher (historical and/or textual) criticism notwithstanding, scriptural references here are treated as reliable accounts of what was said. Scholarship reviewed by Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past & Present* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1996), is seen as more persuasive than the conspiratorial and political assumptions, methodologies, and presuppositions represented by Bart D. Ehrman in his *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005 [and 2007]). See N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 361, 421.

be perceived as such largely because of the paucity of evidence to the contrary. What had begun with the Thomas Tradition—belief that the Apostle brought the Gospel to India in AD 52 and that he suffered martyrdom near what is now Mylapore (Mailapur)—remains extremely strong, whatever the historicity of this tradition may be. So much is this so that, at least in metaphorical terms, the tradition retains canonical status.[4] Events linked to Thomas were followed by important new arrivals of influential and wealthy immigrants from Mesopotamia. Still later, over many centuries, refugees fleeing from persecution by Zoroastrian, Islamic, and other oppressors continued to come to India for more than a thousand years. Each such group often became all but completely cut off from contacts with the Orthodox, and especially from the Catholic communions of Byzantium and Rome. Christians in India, therefore, do not seem to have played a very large part even within the 'Church of the East'.

Christianity in the non-Western world had already expanded eastward in considerable strength, therefore, long before the Great Councils began to codify the institutions of Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christendoms. Such developments in the West in no way mitigated or nullified the various forms of Eastern Christianity which had already become well rooted. It is also important to remember that, by the very time that 'Christendom' in Europe was becoming, at least for a time, the 'established' religion of the West, its very ascendancy in the West was already also beginning to retreat—and that this retreat came largely as a result of influences from the non-Western world. Thus, even as reference points for perceptions about the future of Christians in the world might in our day seem to lie more and more in Asia and Africa (if not in Latin America), somehow the stereotype of 'Christianity' as being an almost exclusively Western imposition upon the world continues to survive and thrive—being repeated, over and over again, as if repetition alone will bring veracity.

The full story about the history of Christianity in India cannot be understood without understanding that, for nearly a thousand years, Christians of the West were so cut off from Christians of the East that a curtain of darkness, ignorance, and incomprehension descended between their two worlds. Significantly, during the initial six centuries of the Christian era most accounts about India's Christians had come to the West through the agency of Christians in the Middle East; but accounts from Christians in lands to the east of the Fertile Crescent (coming via Egypt to Mesopotamia) dwindled drastically during the centuries that followed. After the shadow of

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[4] Thomas Christians continue to respond to sceptics that the evidence for Thomas coming to India is as strong as the evidence for Peter coming to Rome. The presence of the Gospel in India, from this perspective, antedates any canon, creed, or council in the West.

dar-ul-Islam fell over the world between Spain and Sindh, accounts about Christians of India came from Christian travellers, whether as merchants or as monks, who came from lands within Western Christendom. Just as the ecclesiastical offices representing the patriarchies of Antioch and Babylon no longer resided in the cities of their founding, records about their bishoprics in India also disappeared and, for the most part, have yet to surface. One main reason for the curtain of ignorance that descended lies in the fact that in lands where *dar-ul-Islam* held sway over what were still predominantly Christian populations—as was so in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine until the end of the crusades—local Christians seem to have been neither sufficiently free, nor sufficiently privileged or resourceful, and hence were obliged to be more circumspect. Wherever possible, Islamic institutions seem to have stifled missionary or mercantile enterprises of subject Christian communities in their midst.

The nature of high religion in India during medieval times, at least from the Hejra to the arrival of Catholic Christendom in the ships of Vasco da Gama in 1498, serves to explain much about the political and religious encounters that took place thereafter. Such being the case, it is important to understand the high culture of Brahmanical religion that was evolving within India itself and that, while it had no single name, it might best be described by two words: *dharma* and *Sanskriti*. There being no single word in India that corresponds with the term 'religion' or 'religious', *dharma* (or *sanātana-dharma*) is perhaps its closest approximation, while *Sanskriti* is the term that best describes the whole of the high, or classical, civilization and its literatures. This paradigm fits all of the continent except that, in the south, the influence of high or classical civilization was perhaps at times as closely associated with *Sangam* (*Cankam*) Tamil culture, as can be seen in the residues of literatures, arts, and sciences that survived. Also, in order to consider the combined impacts of European Christendom and Western Christianity, it is important to understand the wider contexts within which such impacts were felt. At least a cursory, albeit simplified, review of the major non-Christian religious systems—the already dominant sway of *Sanskriti* (or 'Hindu') *dharma* and the rise of indigenous forms of Islam in India—is a necessary part of comprehending the story of Christianity in India.

Proliferation and Propagation

Just as tiny streams trickle out of snow peaks of the Himalayas and gradually merge and mingle with other streams descending from various peaks before plunging down onto the plains of Hindustan where they join one of the three great river systems and flow slowly toward the sea and break up into

vastly complex deltas, so also tiny streams of Christian presence have trickled into India and then merged and mingled with multiple histories of Christianity in India before breaking into patterns of extraordinary complexity. As far as can be determined, there is almost no form of Christianity that has ever existed in the world—ancient, medieval, or modern—that has not entered and that does not still thrive somewhere within the continent (aka subcontinent). What allegedly and ostensibly began with the Apostle, and what then evolved within Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical (Protestant) forms and traditions, has now emerged, merged, and mingled within movements of expansion among all of the most aboriginal or most despised peoples, as seen among hundreds of separate *adivāsi* and *āvarna* (*Dalit*) Christian communities, each quite distinct and separate from all the others. These are the peoples who, in many ways, have been bypassed by the mainstreams of India's history over the past three millennia, peoples who were either subjugated and held in thraldom or who withdrew back into the forested mountains and escarpments along interior and exterior frontiers that stretch from Kashmir to Kaniya Kumari, that stretch along both the Western and Eastern Ghats, and that stretch from across Gondwana badlands from the Tapti to Mahanadi. Such movements have even made gains in the former princely states of the north-east, such as Manipur and Tripura. A substantial proportion of India's newest converts to Christianity are to be found among such peoples. Still turning Christian in huge numbers, they are the beneficiaries of missionary efforts being sent to help them from almost all of the earlier and older Christian communities. Syrian or Thomas Christian missionaries, whether Catholic or Evangelical, are to be found in the jungled frontiers—not a few of them being numbered among the persecuted and martyred Christians of recent years. Nevertheless, while no one seems to know exactly how many indigenous Christian missionaries there are in India, conservative estimates put the number of missionaries at over 40,000 (with some wilder estimates going as high as 100,000, or one lakh). The lower number is some ten times the number of foreign missionaries who ever served in India at one time.

It is significant that much of the historical record of the Christians of India has come from Thomas Christians or from Christians of upper-class, upper-caste, backgrounds. This is hardly surprising, since such Christians had educational advantages, reinforced by cultural legacies, that enabled them to become more articulate and to leave behind written materials, whether in manuscript or printed form. While this segment of India's Christians, some from Brahman backgrounds, has been comparatively tiny, their ongoing influence, both in India and in the West, has been out of all proportion to their numbers. Many of these 'caste' Christians, as we shall see, have come from Bengal, Maharashtra, or Tamilnadu. These, whether philosophers,

poets, or activists, have almost all tended to accentuate their links to high *Sanskriti* or high Tamil or high Islamic civilization. They have spent much of their lives building bridges between their Christian convictions and the cultural heritage from which they emerged.

So many are the separate stories of distinct Christian communities that, short of producing an encyclopedic work encompassing every tiny element, the task of the historian is to develop a strategy or a tactical paradigm by which to determine not so much what to *include* as what to *exclude*. As in all historical work, much of the coverage and many details had to be left out. Most of the Christian movements cannot be examined. Indeed, any histor- ian is apt to be smitten with remorse at the number of truly noteworthy episodes or narratives of individual Christians, both indigenous and alien, that must be omitted, and not even mentioned. American readers, for example, may be shocked to discover that not a word is written about the renowned Dr Ida Scudder, founder of Vellore Medical College and Hos- pital, or of the world-famous hand surgeon at Vellore, Dr Paul Brand—not to mention Brand's mother and her saintly life of over ninety years in a remote village. The same can be said for many truly noteworthy Catholic saints and scholars, even including Mother Teresa. So many are the in- stances that might be cited that it is pointless even to try to list the most glaring omissions. But justification for omissions can be partially, if not entirely, explained by indicating that this is a study of Christians of India. For the most part, this study strives to be Indocentric—that is, to emphasize, as much as possible, those features of this history that have contributed most to the ongoing vitality of Christians and of Christianity within the contin- ent. Even so, many a truly fascinating but relatively unknown Indian Christian leader, whether pastor, teacher, lawyer, or writer, whose influence or whose work was noteworthy, has not been touched.

It is lamentable, for example, that the history of Christianity in Sri Lanka, and of Nepal, not to mention such areas as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, as well as Punjab and Burma (Myanmar), could not be given more extensive attention within this study. (Similarly, what now constitute Bangladesh and Pakistan, in both of which Christians make up the second largest minority, have not been dealt with, except as they were parts of the continent of Greater India until they became politically distinct sovereign entities sixty years ago.)

In Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, the presence of Christians can be traced back to ancient times. Certainly, Catholic clergy subject to the *Padroado* of Goa later held positions in Colombo and in other Portuguese holdings along the shores and in places not subject to the Kingdom of Kandy in the upland interior of the island. Similarly, from the time that Dutch forces took Jaffna from the Portuguese in 1658, Catholicism, although

outlawed, survived. Dutch chaplains led by Philip Baldaeus[5] took over the grand and commodious church buildings at Batticotta and then strove to turn Tamil-speaking Christians into members of the Reformed Church. But, since the Dutch Company's primary concern was with commercial profits, there was a consequent failure to provide resources to support even the tiny number of chaplains who were missionary minded. As a result, changes were quite superficial. While the number of Christians within the old Jaffna Kingdom came to 200,233, on paper, these seem to have been linked to only thirty-seven congregations scattered throughout five provinces, inasmuch as relatively few persons seem to have attended Christian worship. These Christians were predominantly drawn from aristocratic Vellalar and learned Brahman families. Not surprisingly, their elite values were much the same as those of other Vellalar and Brahman families, even when transformed into a mainly Christian vocabulary. They wrote of their beliefs in Sanskrit and Tamil poetry and literature, metaphorically or mythically tracing their ancient lineages back to Abraham and Keturah. The Christian culture that developed during the eighteenth century, the small Brahman Evangelical community of Jaffna, about which Dennis Hudson has so eloquently written, made contributions to what would become the Evangelical Christian cultures of Thanjavur.[6]

After the British conquered the island in 1796 and it became a Crown Colony in 1816, American and British missionaries joined missionaries from other nationalities. During the twenty years of rule under the East India Company's Government of India, religious freedoms and toleration enjoyed by elites of India brought a resurgence of indigenous religious activity, as was reflected in the building of many hundreds of new shrines and temples. What new missionaries encountered, especially in the south, was a Sinhalese culture that, outside of the Tamil north and shorelines of seafaring folk, was in large measure Buddhist. This was dominated by a Theravada (or Hinayana) aristocracy that prided itself on being the homeland from whence Buddhist institutions and impulses had been exported to Burma (aka Myanmar), Thailand, and Cambodia. While this Buddhist elite had been given, or still possessed, Portuguese or Dutch 'burgher' names by which they made themselves known in public or by which they transacted public affairs, they invariably also treasured a proud heritage of Buddhist

[5] Philippus Baldaeus, *A Short Account of Jaffnapatnam, in the Island of Ceylon, as It was Published in Dutch in the Year 1672* (Colombo: Wesleyan Mission Press, 1816), taken from *A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East-India Coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, as also the Island of Ceylon . . . . Translated from the High Dutch, Printed at Amsterdam in 1672* (London: Printed from A. and J. Churchill, 1704), iii. 561–901.

[6] D. Dennis Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India: Tamil Evangelical Christians, 1706–1835* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 5–9.

cultural identities and personal names. Thus, just as missionary activities did much to bring about the formation of a modern or 'syndicated Hinduism' such as had never before existed, so also more aggressive and often insensitive missionary activities in Sri Lanka (and also in Myanmar), especially polemical tracts that were insulting, provoked Buddhist revivalism in the south—and Saiva reactions in the north (Jaffna).[7] Such raw encounters with foreign missionaries, often unmediated by the softening role of indigenous Christian leadership, were to have dire consequences, except in such fields as science, medicine, and technology. However these early events may be viewed, there can be no denying the fact that, within the current island population of 19,366,334, some 13,234,600 or 68.34 per cent are Buddhist and 9.49 per cent or 1,838,952 are Christian—a figure that compares with 11.22 per cent or 2,173,114 Hindus and 9 per cent or 1,743,142 Muslims. Most Hindus are Tamils and most Muslims may also tend to be predominantly Tamil (with some being of Arab or Malayasian/Indonesian descent).[8]

The Kingdom of Nepal, currently having a population of 26,289,096, of whom 19,020,312 (or 72.35 per cent) are Hindu, 2,484,706 (or 9.45 per cent) are Buddhist, and 1,085,126 (or 4.13 per cent) are Muslim, now has a growing Christian community.[9] This community, largely Evangelical, is approaching one million (917,862 or 3.49 per cent). In this connection, four observations are relevant. First, while it has been a criminal offence, sometimes even a capital offence, for a Nepali subject to turn Christian, circumstances have combined during the past half-century to bring about a dramatic turning of Nepali peoples to Christianity, in spite of the penalties and risks entailed. Between 1760, when the King expelled Capuchins from Kathmandu, and 1914, when a small congregation was established, there seems to have been no public symbol of Christianity within the kingdom. Second, due to nearly two hundred years of recruitment and service as mercenary soldiers, initially as distinct Gurkha regiments of the Indian Army, first under the Raj and then, with competing claims, under the British Crown and under the Indian Republic, hundreds of thousands of Nepali families have migrated to the far corners of the world. As part of an upwardly mobile and prosperous worldwide diaspora, many Nepalis have not only become Christians, but have increasingly participated in or supported missionary activities within their ancient homeland.[10] Third, since

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[7] R. F. Young and G. P. Somaratna, *Vain Debates: The Buddhist–Christian Controversies of Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Vienna: Sammlung de Nobili, 1996); R. F. Young and S. Jebanesan, *The Bible Trembled: The Hindu–Christian Controversies of Nineteenth-Century Ceylon I* (Vienna: Sammlung de Nobili, 1995).

[8] *World Christian Database* (2005): http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Cindy L. Perry, *Nepali around the World: Emphasizing Nepali Christians of the Himalayas* (Kathmandu: EKTA BOOKS, 1997).

Nepal as a princely state has been in many respects no different from many other former princely states of the Indian Union, some of whom were much larger (Hyderabad, Kashmir, Mysore, Travancore, etc.), Nepal has been exposed to evangelizing indigenous missionary movements supported by Christians of India. Finally, although Western missionaries, as such, were never officially allowed into Nepal until comparatively recent times, and even then under only very qualified and restricted conditions, American and European (including Commonwealth) Christians who came into Nepal were allowed to enter the country only to provide discrete public services, most of which were medical in nature. Nevertheless, these conditions enabled them to build up and provide many of those most valuable infra-structural services that, during previous centuries among other peoples, had been the most effective and valuable means of strengthening the culturally indigenous forms of Christianity in India. As a consequence, Nepali Chris-tianity, like Naga Christianity, Mizo Christianity, or Khasi Christianity, to cite just three vigorously indigenous Christian communities in north-east India, has never had to suffer from embarrassing or enervating kinds of 'colonial' dependency that some Christian communities in India had to suffer. In short, Christians of Nepal, especially those linked to the Nepali diaspora, have never known 'colonial' domination, even though they have suffered persecution. Interestingly, some of the same impulses that led to such massive movements into Christianity during the past half-century are factors that can also be seen as having contributed to domestic turbulence in Nepal, and to the rise of a 'Maoist' insurgency against oppression by privileged classes.[11]

Primal Religions and Christianity

Of special importance for understanding the history of Christianity in India is the role of 'primal religion'. This is especially crucial if one wishes to attempt an explanation of how or why it was that Christianity was received and appropriated in significant measure by some communities and not by others. While this issue underlies the entire history of Christianity in India, it rises to the surface in Chapters 8 and 14. These chapters deal with two large categories of peoples: the *āvarna* caste communities and the *adivāsi* tribal communities. The first consisted of all the downtrodden, exploited, oppressed, polluting, 'outcaste', or 'untouchable' (aka *āvarna*) communities who had long been subjugated and who eked out their subsistence on the segregated fringes of the highly Sanskritized and segmented 'Hindu' world,

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[11] Alastair Lawson, 'Who are Nepal's Maoist Rebels?', *BBC News Online South Asia*: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/3573402.stm.

in villages scattered throughout the continent. The most politically self-conscious of peoples within this category now call themselves *Dalits* ('crushed' or 'oppressed' peoples). The second consisted of those not yet subjugated and still fiercely independent or warlike aboriginal (*adivāsi*) communities who, while sometimes exploited and oppressed, struggled to preserve their autonomy and independence by inhabiting dark and remote forested hills on the frontiers, as far away from more highly developed and settled 'Hindu' or Islamic cultures as possible. There have been scores, if not hundreds, of separate peoples in each of these two categories. Each of these peoples, in one way or another, was more directly linked to its own uniquely developed forms of primal religion than to the particular forms of Hindu or Islamic culture which sought to dominate, exploit, or oppress it. Among the first type of people were the Chamars and Chuhras, the Madigas and Malas, the Paraiyars and Pulaiyars, and many more. Among the second type, especially in thickly forested areas of mountainous frontiers surrounding the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, were such tribal peoples as the Khasis, Mizos, Nagas, and many more; and within similarly remote frontiers of the interior were tribal peoples such as the Bhils, Gonds (aka Khonds), Mundas, Santals, and others. For all such peoples as these, primal religions and world views played a prominent part in daily life and primal religions would find affinity with Christian faith.

Primal religion posits the existence of something universally present within all humankind. This presupposition holds that there is no person or people, anywhere in the world or at any time in the past, that has not had to respond, in one way or another, to deeply embedded religious impulses. Whether fully articulated or not, any individual or community that feels anxiety, panic, or threats to survival instinctively resorts to primal religion. Primal responses, outcries of anguish and fear, calls for help, or prayers for escape may be involuntary. Faced with terror, violence, or imminent death, an elemental urgency is evoked. Primordial quests for security and satisfaction and well-being are primal. Such quests are, quite essentially, and not unusually, religious.

'Primal', to repeat, is a positive category. As applied to specific religions, it denotes a basic, elemental impulse within human experience that is anterior, in time, place, and status, to any superimposed religious impulses or subsequent religious institutions.[12] In other words, primal religion is a condition that not only has existed prior to all later systems of religious faith, not to mention all more elaborate institutions stemming therefrom, but also

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[12] Andrew Walls, '10 Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 121 (121–39).

something innate lying beneath other forms of religious experience. In the words of Gillian Mary Bediako, in agreement with Andrew Walls: 'Primal also means basal or elemental, the fundamental substratum of all religious experience, continuing to varying degrees in all later religious traditions', and, as such, it consists of ingredients for 'human understanding of the Transcendent and the world, essential and valid religious insights that may be built upon or suppressed, but not superseded'.[13] All believers, even all non-believers, are primalists—before and underneath whatever else they may believe. Primal religion is a universal, worldwide precondition, a manifest phenomenon that is confined to no one people, culture, or region.

As postulated here, therefore, 'primal' does not mean, or even imply, 'primitive'. Nor should it be confused with or understood as a euphemism for 'primitive'. Indeed, the use of 'primitive' as a category is a designation reflecting arrogations of superiority and attitudes of conceit. 'Primitive', like the term 'animist', is an epithet that was imposed upon subjugated and 'uncivilized' peoples.[14] It was shaped as a consequence of aggressive designs and expansions of European power that, in historical contexts or at least initially, were attempts to bypass and move beyond, or outside, an encircling ring of Islamic encroachment. This negative attitude of confusing and mingling 'primal' with 'primitive' may also, perhaps, have once served to justify European involvement in slave trading between Africa and the New World, as well the holding and exploiting of 'lesser' human beings.

Ultimately, in the post-Enlightenment West, a 'hierarchy of being'—or 'the Great Chain of Being'—was postulated, in which 'primitive' peoples were subject to 'discovery' both by an expansive modern science and expansive liberal theology. With evolutionist overtones, distinctions were made between 'backward' and/or 'primitive' 'natives' encountered throughout the non-Western world and more advanced 'world religions' such as 'Hinduism' and 'Buddhism', not excluding Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, or Shintoism. Above all were the great Abrahamic monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with modern forms of Christianity constituting the ultimate pinnacle of religious achievement. Many modern theologians, under the impetus of higher criticism, did not take primal world views seriously. Like other secular intellectuals, liberal theologians dismissed primal faiths as being primitive and mere superstition. Not

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[13] 'Primal Religion and Christian Faith: Antagonists or Soul-Mates', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 3: 2 (Dec. 2000), 12 (12–16): Issue on Theology in Africa in the 21st century: Essential Foundations.

[14] For a couple of samples of current views on this subject, as taken from websites, see: Timothy D. Hoare, 'Some Basic Concepts in Primal Religion': http://staff.jccc.net/thoare/primal.htm; Mudarras Kadhir Gasnavi, 'Primal Religions': http://www.geocities.com/spenta_mainyu_2/primal.htm.

surprisingly, many Western Christians who became complicit in such thinking saw Europe, as well as North America (not to mention Australia), as a divinely and uniquely favoured Christian and 'civilized' continent. Westerners patronizingly made themselves responsible for dispensing the accumulated treasures of their superior knowledge and wisdom to the non-Western world. In doing so, they failed to realize the deep affinity that existed between the biblical world view and primal world views. Ironically, this failure occurred even while massive accessions to the Christian faith were occurring among peoples holding a primal world view.

The very existence of a substratum of 'primal' religious experience among persons and peoples of every clime or time suggests that each subsequent system of faith, whether 'major' or 'minor', had been superimposed upon some primal faith. Yet each primal religion has itself also been subject to change: facing adjustments and alterations, decays and revivals, reforms and/or reactions, developments and innovations.

Primal religion as a category, therefore, ought not to be confused with different particular phenomena within various individual primal religions. Elements of religious life are not all the same; nor are they the same as structures of religious life. For example, primal faiths can exhibit different forms of theism; different levels of religious insight; different responses to stressful tensions; different networks of religious experiences; and different ways in which religious faith might be related to essentials of livelihood.[15] Changes within different primal religions may also not be easily subject to classification, especially with reference to such categories as 'monotheism', 'polytheism', and/or 'pantheism'. Changes that disturb, and interrelated elements of primal religion, can occur unevenly; some changes may not affect all members of a community in the same way or to the same degree; and again, changes within primal religious communities are neither inevitable, inasmuch as the mere intrusion of alien influences may not necessarily, or immediately, change the basic character of a well-established primal world view (since all communities have a tendency to cling onto or conserve traditions); major changes of traditional institutions can be accompanied by disillusionment and re-evaluation and measures of 'agnosticism'; and, finally, in the face of change, some symbols and institutions can wither or fall away while, at the same time, others can be retained, for ceremonial or other purposes. In short, changes in world view have rarely, if ever, necessitated a loss of indigenous cultural identity.[16]

Far from being antagonistic, primal religions and Christian faith have often possessed unique kinds of affinity. These kinds of affinity have allowed

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[15] Walls, '10 Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World', 121–4.
[16] Ibid. 124–6.

peoples from primal religious backgrounds to successfully encounter cultural change, 'embracing Christ without loss to their sense of cultural identity. This means turning to Christ what is already there and not a total denigration of one's past.'[17] How this has occurred can be shown in narrative concerning the emergence of different religious movements that resulted from encounters between Christian faith and various primal religions over the entire course of Christian history since its very beginning. One has but to look at the appropriation and the embracing of Christian faith out of the 'varied, yet common, religious traditions around the world from which Christians have come; whether it be the Semitic religions of Old Testament period, the religions of Greece and Rome in the early Christian era, the religions of the tribal peoples of northern and western Europe from the 4th and 5th centuries onwards, and in the 19th and 20th centuries, the indigenous [primal] religions of Latin America, or parts of Asia, and especially of Africa'.[18] In short, the entire history of Christian expansion has been a history of encounters with primal religions, and of appropriations by them, in one way or another.

From a biblical and theological, if not a historical, perspective, primal religion can be seen as stretching back to the Day of Pentecost, if not to before that—to something that existed anterior to the Tower of Babel and to the legacy of the *imago dei* of Divine Creation that left 'a spark of eternity' within every human being. On the Day of Pentecost, the legacy of Babel was reversed: at a time when 'devout Jews from every nation under heaven' gathered in Jerusalem—Parthians and Medes, Elamites; those who dwelt in Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, as well as Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Libya; even visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—listeners each heard Galilean Apostles speak in their own native tongue.[19] Each people understood what the Apostles said within idioms of their own peculiar culture, if not also from within a common, if culturally unique primal religion. Primal faiths, in this sense, may even reflect a prophetic dimension.

The Apostle Paul later explained that, for persons or peoples who do not possess or have not had direct access to an advanced system of law or religion, it was possible for the devout and earnest to 'carry out the precepts' of divine law, or religion, by the light of nature. Innate impulses, even though not stemming directly from established systems of law, or advanced religion, might yet enable some persons or peoples to display the effects of that law or religion 'inscribed on their hearts and minds'. For such persons

[17] Bediako, 'Primal Religion and Christian Faith', 5 (citing Walls). Andrew Walls, 'Culture and Conversion in Christian History', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 43.

[18] Bediako, 'Primal Religion and Christian Faith', 12.

[19] Acts of the Apostles 2: 5–12.

or peoples, it was possible, regardless of probabilities, for an unblemished or unsullied conscience to assist thoughts in order to argue complex dilemmas or difficult situations as these were faced, on either side or the other, for or against actions and thoughts, inasmuch as the very secrets of one's inner being—within the human heart itself—could bring about an assurance of the rightness or wrongness of a particular predicament.[20] Paul, in short, appealed to the possibility, if not the probability, of an efficacious primal religion. He argued for the universal existence of an inherent and residual substratum of primal religion that exists within each and every human person and/or people.

Events of Pentecost and words of the Apostle Paul were, in that sense, echoes of what Jesus himself had declared, as recorded in all four of the Gospels. He said that he had come into the world not to serve the healthy but those who were ill; not the rich but the poor and desperate; not the satisfied in need of nothing but those who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness'. Such words appealed to the whole of humankind, Jews and non-Jews alike. They spoke to a prior and timeless condition, an already universally present 'primal' religious impulse that was anterior to all more elaborate systems of religious faith, such as that of the 'scribes and Pharisees'. He declared that it was often more difficult for the haves to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.[21]

Much has been written about this highly complex, and sometimes contentious, subject and its various ramifications. Suffice it to point out there is a considerable literature, and that Africanists took the lead in this field over forty years ago. Among cognitive and symbolic anthropologists whose work moved away from seeing primal as merely 'primitive mentality' were such notable figures as Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and Robin Horton. Horton discovered models of reality in the lives of African peoples that transcended everyday experience.[22] John V. Taylor's *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1963) and works by Harold W. Turner, E. G. Parrinder, J. D. Y. Peel, Andrew F. Walls, and others laid the foundations for new approaches to the study of primal religions and new appreciations for affinities between primal religions and Christianity. Among these, perhaps no one did more to light a beacon for works that have followed than Harold W. Turner and Andrew

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[20] Letter to Romans 2: 14–15.

[21] The Gospel of Jesus Christ According to St Matthew 5: 6; 9: 12; 19: 20. For critical perspectives, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), for a fresh approach to what has long been held as controversial among critics.

[22] e.g. 'African Conversion', *AFRICA: Journal of the International African Institute*, 41: 2 (Apr. 1971).

F. Walls. Turner's many influential works, such as his 'A Typology for African Religious Movements',[23] 'The Primal Religions of the World and their Study' (1977),[24] and 'The Way Forward in the Religious Study of African Primal Religions' (1981),[25] along with his massive six-volume *Bibliography of New Religious Movements in Primal Societies* (1977–92),[26] were celebrated in *Exploring New Religious Movements: Essays in Honour of Harold W. Turner*, edited by Andrew F. Walls and Wilbert R. Shenk (1990).[27] Walls's own influential article 'Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World' (1996),[28] which serves as an intellectual inspiration for part of this book, has had an equally celebrated worldwide impact.

Two of Walls's many intellectual disciples, Kwame and Gillian M. Bediako, continue to stimulate an expansion of research into primal religions of Africa. This common concern, and confluences of mutual influence, is reflected in Kwame Bediako's *Christianity in Africa: Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (1996)[29] and in Gillian M. Bediako's *Primal Religion and the Bible: William Robertson Smith and his Heritage* (1997).[30]

Whether, and how much, a deeper appreciation and understanding of affinities between primal religions and Christianity in India now exists is an obvious and legitimate question. That such affinities have already been studied, especially with reference to tribal or *adivāsi* peoples in north-eastern India, seems abundantly clear. One recent scholarly sample of such work should be sufficient to document the potential of this approach. Lalsangkima Pachuau's article, entitled 'Mizo "Sakhua" in Transition: Change and Continuity from Primal Religion to Christianity' (2006), is but a small sample.[31] More works of this kind are being produced. That more research works are needed is also becoming abundantly clear.

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[23] *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 1: 1 (1967), 1–34.

[24] In Victor C. Hayes (ed.), *Australian Essays in World Religions* (Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1977), 27–37.

[25] *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 12: Fasc. 1 (1981), 1–15.

[26] (Boston: G. K. Hall, *c*.1977–92).

[27] (Elkhart, Ind.: Mission Focus, 1990).

[28] *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

[29] (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

[30] (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

[31] *Missiology: An International Review*, 34: 1 (Jan. 2008), 41–57. Other samples of such work, with special reference to tribal peoples of India, are Barbara M. Boal, *Human Sacrifice and Religious Change* (London: Artis and Phillips, 1982) and her *Fire is Easy: The Tribal Christian and his Traditional Culture* (Manila: Christian Institute for Ethnic Studies in Asia, 1973); P. Juliusson, *The Gonds and their Religion: A Study of the Integrative Function of a Religion in a Peasant, Preliterary, Preindustrial Culture in Madhya Pradesh* (Stockholm: Acta Universitätis Stockholmensis, 1974). For more, see Ch. 13.

History and Historiography

No attempt to write a comprehensive single-volume history of Christianity in India has heretofore ever been completed, at least as far as this writer knows. This is not to say that such efforts have not been made or that there have not been all sorts of impressive and scholarly, as well as popular, works on Christians in India. Indeed, the variable array of works in the literature on this subject is vast. A considerable number of these works are listed in the Bibliography. Yet, out of all of these, three notable attempts to produce a more comprehensive history need to be considered and, in some measure, evaluated.

The first attempt at a general history was made by James Hough. Hough, one of Charles Simeon's disciples, took indefinite leave from his clerical sinecure or 'living' to serve as a military chaplain within the Madras Army. With revenues from his parish, he was able to turn his position into that of a surrogate 'missionary'. After several years in the Company's cantonment at Palaiyamkottai, in Tirunelveli, from 1816 to 1820, he retired to his parish in England. There, in addition to engaging in a fierce pamphlet debate with Abbé Dubois over the possibility or impossibility of the 'conversion of Hindus', he devoted himself to historical scholarship. His five-volume *History of Christianity in India, from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, published over a period of twenty-one years, from 1839 to 1860, was not fully completed until after his death, by virtue of his son's filial dedication. The entire work, concentrating quite heavily upon the centuries before the arrival of the Danish, Dutch, and British, never touched upon more than the main story of Thomas (aka Syrian) Christians and their resistance to Catholic ecclesiastical conquests. As such, the work is not only out of date by a century and a half, but is far from satisfactory insofar as issues of coverage or scholarly detachment are concerned. A parallel single-volume *Christianity in India: A Historical Narrative* (London, 1855) was written by Sir John Kaye. One of the renowned Company historians of the nineteenth century, Kaye's work covered many of the same events and depended upon many of the same source materials. In some ways Kaye's book is like a condensed version of what Hough produced. It reflects much of the same Pietistic ethos that was then fashionable among many of the Company's civil and military officers in India. As such, it is heavily Anglican, Anglocentric, and Evangelical in perspective.

A second noteworthy work is by Stephen Neill. Alas, this consists of only two parts of a trilogy that was never completed. The second volume of Stephen Neill's *A History of Christianity in India* (Cambridge, 1984 and 1885) was not yet completed when he died. This volume was then posthumously brought out in 1986 by Alister McGrath of Wycliffe Hall,

Oxford. Envisioned sixty years earlier, this trilogy was meant to be the crowning achievement of a lifetime, by one of the most renowned author-ities, one whose scores of books on church history and Christian missions ranked him with Roland Bainton and Kenneth Scott Latourette. As an infant, he was 'carried off to India in 1901' by missionary parents. He later spent twenty years in Tirunelveli, first as a missionary and then as a bishop. After the loss of his bishopric in 1945, he was obliged to devote the rest of his days to scholarship—at Cambridge, Hamburg, Nairobi, and elsewhere.[32] By the time of his death in Oxford (August 1984), he had become an institution whose enormous productivity and erudition placed him in a class by himself and within a long line of Cambridge authorities on India, stretching from Henry Martyn to Percival Spear, Gordon Johnson, Christopher and Susan Bayly. While still a young man, working among some of India's oldest non-Catholic communities and in close proximity to the ancient communities of Thomas Christians in what is now the state of Kerala, he realized that no coherent and truly comprehensive account of the growth of Christian faith in India was available. No single major work had combined the history of the three largest Christian communities—the Thomas (Syrian) Christians, Cath-olics, and Evangelicals or Protestants. He never realized how huge would be the impact of Pentecostal Christians in the world. Catholic writers had ignored Evangelical or Protestant communities; Evangelical or non-Catholic writers had ignored Catholics; and, although both knew that Thomas Christians were ancient, neither had studied them to his satisfaction. None of the five volumes by James Hough, not the single volume by John W. Kaye, not the study of Catholic Christians by M. M. Müllbauer;[33] nor even Julius Richter's magisterial *Indische Missionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1906; expanded 1924), or *A History of Christianity in India* (Edinburgh, 1908), met Neill's own standards of breadth, detachment, and thoroughness.

Christianity in India, Neill insisted, must always be understood as an indigenous phenomenon and not—neither merely nor only—as an alien transplant. From his perspective, Christianity was and is no more inherently European (or Western) than it is Indian (or Eastern). The origins of Christian faith lay, after all, in neither Europe nor India, but in the Middle East (and Palestine). Thus, just as Christianity had been coloured by cultural elements native to Europe (whether Celtic, Nordic, or Slavic), so there had always been a colouring of Christianity within its 'Hindu' environment—aka 'contextualization', 'indigenization', or 'naturalization'—or what some

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[32] Dyron Daughrity, 'A Genuinely Human Existence: An Historical Investigation into the Conflicted Life of Stephen Neill upon the Termination of his Bishopric (1945)' (University of Calgary, Ph.D. thesis, 2004).

[33] *Geschichte der katholischen Missionen in Ostindien von der Zeit Vasco da Gamas bis zur Mittel des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg i.B., 1852).

today might label 'nationalization'. Institutions of any religious tradition were always 'embedded' within a particular and local cultural matrix. He realized that some of the very oldest communities in India could be seen as 'Hindu–Christian', 'Hindu–Jewish', or even 'Hindu–Muslim'. So also, Indo-Portuguese, or Goan, communities, having also taken root and acquired indigenous features, had contributed to local styles of art and architecture. By this same logic, India's history could be seen as one long honeycombing process, combining cultural accretions that went back to the Indo-Greeks; and, even earlier, to the Indo-Aryans.

Not denying that Eurocentric counter-examples abounded within writings about Christianity in India, Neill lived long enough to see the vindication of his views. A new emphasis upon more indigenous kinds of Christian culture in India was being brought to light by younger scholars. From his perspective, one could well understand why Christians and Christian missionaries in India alike had for so long been viewed as the 'handmaidens' of imperialism. How could it have been otherwise, considering how many minds had been so exclusively nurtured upon this one-eyed kind of Eurocentric historiography? Ironically, to the dismay of Indian Christian scholars, it was precisely this perspective that Neill himself never quite managed to escape. Exactly how far Neill succeeded in producing the kind of history he advocated can be seen in his final two volumes. As revealed within hundreds of pages of scholarly apparatus, in the special appendices and annotated bibliographies that he provided, the array of materials that undergirded his analysis was garnered from materials taken from almost every relevant language. The sources were then subjected to 'severe selection and compression'.

In his analysis, Neill sought to trace the ancient origins of Thomas Christians and then to explore the interactions of various religious movements down through the ages. Determining that lack of hard evidence continued to shroud the historicity of Thomas the Apostle in India, he devoted much attention to what had happened *after* the arrival of the Portuguese—from the arrival of Vasco da Gama (1498) to the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. What happened during the decline of Vijayanagara, the rise of Madurai and Thanjavur, and the high noon of Mughal ascendancy, when the *Estado da India*, with its seat in Goa, was conceived as a crusade, led Neill to focus attention upon the *Padroado* which, while nominally under the Portuguese crown, enjoyed enormous autonomy and was never fully controlled by either Lisbon or Rome. Priests sailed from Europe with each fleet. Quests were often ecclesiastical and imperial. In these quests, religious orders, first the Franciscans and then the Jesuits, took the lead. From their monastic and collegial citadels, members of these orders moved out into the countryside to win converts and to expand their clerical

domains. Despite their previous affinities, ancient Mar Thoma communities were compelled, by force of arms, to submit to the *Padroado*. Paravars and Mukkavars, fisherfolk along the shorelines who were caught between Hindu lords of the land and Muslim lords of the sea, were only too glad to oblige Goa, Francis Xavier, and his successors; and, in consequence, they prospered. Other peoples resented such pressures and reacted violently to these *Pfarangis* (aka Europeans). Missionaries moved along the coasts of India, from the Gulf of Broach and the Konkan around the Cape (Kaniya Kumari) to the Coromandel and the Sundarbans of Bengal. Jesuits reached inland to the high seats of Mughal power in Agra, Delhi, and Lahore. Before the *masnād-i-mu'alla* ('exalted throne') of Akbar and in the durbars of his successors, they brought their learning, their libraries, and their medicines.

Much of this is familiar enough. The old story of Western influence is well known, with scholars too often allowing ideology to colour what they see. Neill, while relying heavily on European documents, strove to avoid simplistic Eurocentric boundaries. His emphasis, using all sorts of empirical data with insight and sensitivity, was upon the complexities of local cultures and contexts. It is this indigenous kind of Christian culture which other scholars are now bringing to our attention. Susan Kaufmann Bayly, in her work on the Paravar (Catholic) Christians of Tirunelveli (as also in her work on the Lubbai and other Muslim communities of South India), has signalled the arrival of this new kind of perspective. My own work on the earliest non-Catholic ('Evangelical') Christians of India has tried to show how Vellalar preachers and teachers brought their doctrines from Tranquebar to Thanjavur and then to Tirunelveli, along with infrastructures, printed materials, and schools. Such 'indigenizing' work was eventually reflected, as Dennis Hudson has shown, in the now 'classic' writings of Vedanayakam Sastriar and H. A. Krishna Pillai; and, again, in the diary and journals of a mid-nineteenth-century village teacher named Savariraya Pillai. Similar in outlook have been the works of Judith Brown, John B. Carman, Carl Gustav Diehl, Duncan B. Forrester, Mark Jurgensmeyer, G. A. Oddie, Bror Tilliander, and Richard Fox Young. Neill can be seen as a forerunner. He strove to maintain standards—in balance, fairness, generosity, as well as in sensitive and sympathetic probings of contrary, even contradictory or bitterly conflicting positions, whether Christian or non-Christian. His two volumes—volume three, while projected, was never written—reflect profound scholarship, and matchless erudition. Their one failing lies in their somewhat 'colonialistic' and strongly Anglican bias, and occasionally slanted *ad hominem* comments that are unwarranted.

The third comprehensive attempt is a series of matched volumes, and part of a project. Scholarly works by the Church History Association of India (aka CHAI) are found in two streams of publication resulting from

collaboration between Indian Christian scholars. Hundreds of articles, mostly published in the *Indian Church History Review*, began in 1967. The *History of Christianity in India*, projected at six volumes, began with volumes by Mathias Mundadan in 1984, Joseph Thekkedath in 1982, and Edward Rene Hambye in 1997. These cover mainline communities—Orthodox (Thomas/Syrian), Catholic, and Evangelical (and Protestant)—down to the eighteenth century. Later works, slower to appear, are separate sub-volumes. Volume iv, part 2: *Tamil Nadu in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Bangalore, 1990), was by Hugald Grafe, a German scholar at Munich University; and volume v, part 5: *North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Bangalore, 1992), was by Frederick S. Downs, an American missionary scholar, born of missionary parents in Meghalaya, who once served as Executive Director of *Indian Church History Review*. Seven parts of volumes iv and v, together with all of volume vi, have yet to be published. This entire project has served to galvanize younger scholars and has led to hundreds of articles on a wide variety of subjects, not all of them of a high quality. Taken together, works under the auspices of the Church History Association of India (CHAI) are a remarkable treasure trove for serious scholars.

What follow in the next two chapters are basic, fundamental, and general understandings about India, in its major geographical, physical, ethno-demographic, linguistic, socio-political, and religious aspects—sometimes in simplified or stereotypical form. While much of the material, in one form or another, is readily attainable elsewhere, even from encyclopedic sources or from gazetteers and manuals, the analysis and presentation of this material, however abbreviated, is what the author has digested and interpreted over the course of the past fifty years. As presented hereafter, it provides essential contextualizations, without understanding which it would be almost impossible to fully grasp the varied histories of Christian communities in India. For this reason, the analysis and synthesis of information that follows represents a perspective that, however common, is also idiosyncratic. (For those already deeply immersed in things Indian, and who may not feel such an interpretative perspective is necessary for their own understandings of India, Chapter 4 may be a place to start.)

CONTEXTUALIZING COMPLEXITY, I: INDIA'S LANDS, PEOPLES, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Christianity's entry and expansion in India cannot be understood without some understanding of the continent or subcontinent and its various cultures. One can hardly exaggerate the historical role that contexts have played in shaping the destiny of India's peoples. India, as defined here, is not just a discrete and self-contained continent (or a 'subcontinent' as it is conventionally called), but also a cultural construction in the minds of its many peoples. Great physical barriers and distances have cut off and separated this part of the world from the rest of the planet. This cutting off or separation, if not complete, has been at least sufficient to prevent India from ever being casually or quickly overrun by alien or hostile human forces. Geographic India possesses certain undisputed features. These have marked off external boundaries with barriers that have controlled or determined the nature and volume of contacts with the outside world and also, despite certain distinct internal compartments, provided India with a unique territorial unity within the 'continent' itself. In terms of marginality, size, and population, the continent of India is no less of a peninsular projection of the great land mass of Eurasia than is Europe, or China. Indeed, distinctive differences between India and China, as seen in geographical, demographic, ethnographic, and linguistic, as well as cultural, religious, and social systems, are as extreme as are their separate differences from Europe. Without understanding such distinctions, if only in cursory and elemental terms, any narratives about the history of Christianity in India are difficult to understand. It is for this reason that considerable space is being devoted to contextualizations.

Geo-environmental Settings

But for a few passes and seaports, which serve as doors and windows, the continent is completely and effectively encircled by a high and thick wall of mountains and by a broad, deep moat of oceans. The bleak snow peaks and

the razor-sharp ridges of the Himalaya and Karakorum ranges are so extensive that, over the centuries, only tiny trickles of trade and traffic have painstakingly managed to creep into India from the north. The awesome grandeur and majestic sweep of the Himalayas or 'Home of Snows' continually staggers the imagination and defies description. Even the foothill approaches, such as the Siwaliks, which rise from plains that are nearly at sea level to 5,000 feet, are impressive. But, as eyes reach across the valleys (called *duns*, *doons*) and rise before the lesser Himalayas, the dazzling whiteness of the Great Himalaya itself comes into view. No camera can fully capture or do justice to this view. Stretching over 1,500 miles from beyond the Indus gorge in the Hindu Kush and Pamirs to the gorge of the Brahmaputra in the east, this vast complex of parallel and forking ranges has ninety-two peaks higher than 24,000 feet. Its main ridges average 20,000 feet. No other continent has such peaks or ridges. No other continent has more than a few peaks that reach even as high as the passes by which one might cross the Himalayas. Himalayan passes, in short, are higher than most Alpine peaks. In comparison, Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the contiguous USA, is only 14,495; and Mount McKinley not all that much higher. Five of the mighty ramparts of Nepal, in contrast, exceed 26,000. Highest and most famous are Sagarmatha (Mount Everest: 29,035 ft), Kanchenjunga (28,146), and Makalu (27,790). Behind the Himalayas and the Karakorums lie hundreds of miles of barren, snow-swept tablelands of Tibet, roughly averaging an altitude of 14,000 feet. Small wonder that India has been shielded from the bitterly cold Arctic winds of Central Asia by its Himalayan wall.

This Himalayan wall stretching across the north is flanked by less high, but still formidable mountain chains on each side. The ranges between Assam and Burma in the east, such as the Naga hills, are guarded by dense, nearly impenetrable rainforests which are soaked for half the year by the world's heaviest torrential rainfalls. The rugged Kirthar and Makran ranges in the west are backed by dry, rocky deserts. Both of these systems of mountain chains are spurs on the flanks of the Himalayas which run down to meet the sea. In the east, parallel ridges and troughs run along the Arakan–Burmese coast before plunging into the Bay of Bengal, only to re-emerge in the Malaysian peninsula and island archipelago of Indonesia (Sumatra, Java, etc.). In the west, mountain chains reach in great arcs, in loop after swirling loop of cutting, arid ridges, narrow, wild gorges, and burning deserts, until they plunge into the Arabian Sea. Two great bays, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, are but ocean flanks of the vast Indian Ocean. The far shores of this giant moat are many hundreds, if not thousands of miles away. Truly, geographic India has been a continent, cut off and distinct in and of itself.

Only two or three passes in the north-west of the Indian continent, such as the famous Khyber and the no less important Bolan, have provided easy access to India for masses of migrating peoples or for large invading armies. With their corridor approaches from Persia and Central Asia, these passes have been the historic gateways to India. Whenever kings on the northern plains of India have been weak, fierce horsemen have broken through these gates and brought fire and sword to the plains of Punjab and Hindustan. Among names of warrior peoples who have done this are the following: Aryans, Sythians (*Shakas*), Greeks (*Yavanas*), Kushanas, Parthians, Huns (*Hunas*), and Turks. Alexander the Great marched his forces into the Punjab and then down the Indus to the sea. Over a thousand years later, in 1399, the hordes of Tamerlane, the Iron Limper, brought death, destruction, and suffering to untold numbers of people who lived in the cities, towns, and villages of the north. Much depended upon the strength and power of kings in North India. But no less important was the strength of rulers seated upon the Persian highlands. These highlands, after all, controlled the western ends of major roads leading toward the gateways of India. A strong Persia and a weak India meant raiding and pillaging by Persian and Afghan armies. A weak Persia, on the other hand, could expose India to attack from vastly more dangerous tides of human energy that periodically flowed out of Central Asia. Yet when the centres of power in northern India remained strong enough to keep these passes closed, it was possible to hold back invading hosts and hordes. This occurred, for example, when imperial rulers in North India held back the Seleucid Greeks and the Mongols.

The consequence of these geopolitical circumstances has been that until modern times, India was never casually invaded nor ever completely conquered and overrun by a world empire. Countless thrusts into North India by neighbouring powers have been suffered, along with many humiliations. But the continent has yet to feel the full weight of a political tidal wave. Distances have always been so great and problems of logistics (communication and transportation) so formidable that all such waves of world power have lost much of their force by the time they reached beyond the gates of India. At the same time, travellers and traders coming from afar have brought, exchanged, or borrowed some of the world's most powerful ideas to and from India.

Internally the continent of India, about the size of the United States east of the Mississippi and covering some 1.72 million square miles, is roughly shaped like a gigantic triangle, stretching nearly 2,000 miles from the Burma border in the east to the Iranian border (with Afghanistan and Baluchistan) in the west and 2,000 miles from the Hindu Kush to Kaniya Kumari (or Cape Comorin). Just as the whole continent is itself divided by the Tropic

of Cancer, so its inner features are best understood in terms of dividing the north from the south.

The central feature of North India is the gigantic Indo-Gangetic plain, together with all of the sacred rivers that flow into it. This plain, 80–200 miles wide, stretches some 1,500 miles from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. It is so flat and its rise to about 700 feet above sea level, between Delhi and Lahore, is so gradual that one does not notice when one has left the watershed of the Jumna (Yamuna) River and the Gangetic system into that of the Punjab (or land of 'five rivers') which feeds the Indus. This crescent-shaped plain, perhaps the largest expanse of alluvial land in the world, especially in its Gangetic portion, had long been one of the most densely populated places on earth. As long as the rains have not failed and the rivers have been full, the land has been able to feed its people. Perhaps for this reason, all rivers are sacred and are often named or seen as divine, often being named after a goddess; and all confluences of rivers along the Ganga are especially sacred places that seem always to have drawn pilgrim throngs in millions to their auspicious shores. The plain is watered by the great river systems of the Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra, all of which seem to rise from very nearly the same place in Tibet, thousands of miles from their mouths. The western end of this huge plain stretches from the semi-arid banks of the Indus and Punjab eastward down the Ganges or Ganga plain until it meets the western end of the lush but relatively underpopulated Assam plain. Here the tremendous flows of the Ganges or Ganga intermingle or merge with waters of the mighty Brahmaputra and then break up or mingle among countless streams within a huge and labyrinthine delta. The many-mouthed outer edges of this delta, known as the Sundarbans, have forever abounded with living creatures—insects, snakes, crocodiles, tigers, pirates, criminals, and other forms of wild life. The western end of this huge northern plain is bounded by the arid wastes of Baluchistan on the far side and the deserts of Sindh and Rajasthan, on the near side. Finally, to the north are forested slopes and colder hill regions, the largest of which is Kashmir, 84,471 square miles of enchantingly beautiful mountain country just north of the Punjab which can be seen, in many ways, as Asia's Switzerland.

The plains and peoples of North India have been effectively separated from those of South India by a wide belt of hilly ridges and jungle wildernesses in Central India, now known as Madhya Pradesh. This belt, with its series of parallel hill ranges and river valleys, gradually coils its way up onto the vast Deccan plateau. The belt stretches from the desert wastes of Sindh across the Chambal badlands and Gondwana jungles into the broken hills and valleys of Orissa. Historically, this huge central or interior frontier with its dense forests has been the homeland of hundreds of distinct and fiercely independent aboriginal (*adivāsi*) peoples, such as Bhils and Khonds, Mundas

and Santals, to name but a few. Coming from the north, the pilgrim or adventurer travelling to the Deccan would have to cross the ridges of the Vindhya hills, then the westward-flowing Narbada, the Aravali hills, and yet another westward-flowing river, the Tapti.

The dominating feature of the south is the Deccan. The name is derived from *Dakshinapatha*—'paths on the right hand'—the label used by Aryans who, facing eastward after entering the continent from beyond the passes in the north-west, used the term when referring to lands to the right or 'south'. The surface of this enormous glacier-made plateau is geologically one of the oldest places on earth. It is a giant tableland studded with extremely hard granite hills, blackened by age and weather, that often look like so many huge boulders which have been dropped from the sky and half sunk into a plain of soft reddish mud. The larger of these hills are crowned with impressive ancient fortresses while the smaller are decorated with pretty white shrines. This great Deccan table is a peninsular triangle that tilts eastward. Its two sides are hemmed with an inner fringe of mountain ranges and an outer fringe of coastal plains. But since the Deccan tilts toward the Bay of Bengal, its Western *Ghats* (or 'Steps') are mountain ranges that are much higher and more imposing ridges than the lower, more broken ranges of the Eastern Ghats. These western ranges are as impressive to behold as the Rockies or Sierras of North America or those stretching from the Balkans to Iran. Moreover, the coastal plain of the west, known as the Konkan in the north and as Malabar in the south, is much narrower and wetter than the broken hill ranges along the Coromandel coast on the eastern shores of peninsular India. Again because of the eastward tilt of the Deccan, all of the really great rivers of South India flow into the Bay of Bengal. The north-ernmost of these is the Mahanadi; then the Godavari and the Krishna that flow into a huge common delta; next, the Kaveri with its huge delta and its ancient irrigation systems; and, finally, the Tambraparni. Since peoples of South India have always been heavily dependent upon these rivers for survival and prosperity, the waters of these rivers have also been seen as sacred. The ocean-washed extreme toe of India at its very southernmost tip, as the meeting place of 'Three Seas', has the name of a royal goddess known as Kaniya Kumari (Princess Kaniya), from whence comes the name of Cape Comorin.

Climate has governed life to a degree which can be difficult for outsiders to fully grasp. Commonest among mistaken notions perhaps is the idea that climate is always hot and dry and dusty. True, some speak only in terms of the hot weather and the cold weather, while others distinguish only be-tween the wet or 'monsoon' season and the dry season. Yet, while there may be good reasons for making such distinctions, much variety and contrasting extremes characterize weather and its role.

Water, that most important essential of life, has played a tremendous role in India's history. Rainfall, rather than just temperature, has been the crucial variable, except inasmuch as temperature controls rainfall, air pressures, and wind currents. Cherrapunji, the wettest place on earth, has averaged 450 inches of rain each year; and has a record of 900 inches, of which 500 inches fell in less than two months. Ladakh, on the other hand, gets its water only from melting ice and snow. It is said that you can sometimes see rain falling from clouds over the Sindh desert, but that this rain evaporates before it can touch the ground. On the plains of the north, the dry season brings dust so fine that it hangs suspended for days on end in a grey-tan pall that blots out the sun. On the coasts of the south, cloying dampness so profound that clothes mildew and metals rust can drain human energy. Yet, whatever the extremes of moisture, surplus, sufficiency, or insufficiency of water has been determined by the annual monsoon (the Arabic term for 'season').

The monsoon is a predictable system of seasonal winds blowing to and fro across the Arabian Sea. Since winds often brought rains, the term commonly came to mean 'the rains'. Discovered in about AD 50 and used by sailing ships, the South-West Monsoon blows from Africa toward India during months from June to September. Moisture carried by this current of air reaches ridges of the Western Ghats first, falling upon the western slopes and draining off into the narrow but lush coastal lagoons and plains. Depending upon the weight of moisture-laden clouds, rains then also fall upon the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats and drain off eastwards into the great river systems of the Deccan. In a good year, enough moisture might also be left to bring refreshing showers to the Deccan itself, along with cooler weather (especially in places like Karnataka). What little rain might remain would be left for the coastal plains of the east. Moisture from a second stream of this monsoon would miss South India altogether, bringing heavy rains to Sri Lanka and crossing the Bay of Bengal before rolling up the mountain ranges of Burma into Assam. Finally, by that time, if the monsoon reaches Assam, it turns and begins to roll up along the Himalayas toward the west, slowly dissipating as it moves across the parched earth of the Indo-Gangetic plain, until hardly any rain falls to the west of the Punjab. Thus, after reaching Bengal around 15 June, and then proceeding north-westward, rains reach Delhi a week to a fortnight later, and then hardly reach Lahore and Rawalpindi.

Then, after a transitional period of very humid, sticky weather between October and late November, when the South-West Monsoon 'retreats' or runs out of steam, cool breezes begin to blow in the opposite direction. From December to March, the winds reverse and turn into the North-East Monsoon. These pick up some moisture as they pass over the Bay of Bengal, bring occasional cloudbursts and floods, especially in south-west India,

before blowing back across the Arabian Sea to the shores of Africa. Thus, all life in India, for centuries untold, has been governed by rain—by famines and floods, and by human attempts to control both. In winter months, temperatures in the northwest rarely dip to freezing, dropping as much as 40 °F after sunset, while the mountain slopes of the north will be locked in ice and snow. But by March hot dry winds begin to build up in intensity, so that by May daytime temperatures can reach 120 °F and refuse to fall below 90 °F at night. In the south, temperatures can remain much the same day and night. Under such a sun, tying a man in the sun was once a form of torture and of public execution. As 'thirst' cracks open in the ground, tensions increase, in both people and animals, and tempers become short—until the monsoon 'breaks' and torrents of rain transform the land; and people give vent to their pent-up emotions with hilarity and rejoicing. Hot weather and the coming of rains dominate much of each year, inspiring poetry and song. But, if the rains fail, as they have done at many times in the past, heat and famine and death for millions have followed.

Ethno-demographic Settings

Just as physical geography has played a vital part in shaping the destiny of India's peoples, so also has the extreme complexity, diversity, and multiplicity of various aspects of India's human geography. How the population within the continent (in what is now India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) came to have over 3,000 distinct and separate ethnic communities that, for the most part and on grounds of both biological and cosmological categories for determining personal and ritual purity or pollution, do not intermarry or interdine, is a result of a long sequence of historical circumstances.

Unlike the United States, India never became a great 'melting pot' where many kinds of people came together and learned to speak a common tongue, intermarry, and share a common civic outlook. Rather, more like Europe, it has been a huge 'mixing pot'—a continent where countless numbers of different kinds of people have mingled but have never lost their most distinctive features. Groups never lost their elemental identities because, from the outset and for the most part, they did not allow members to intermarry across ethnic, cultural, and/or class lines. As much as possible, each distinct ethnic group strove not to intermarry and, to that end, developed sophisticated social technologies for retaining its own unique place in the universe. In doing so, each community perfected some incredibly complex and durable systems of social control—by means of customs, rituals, and other institutions. As a consequence, for century after century, despite the perpetual coming of one people after another people into the

continent, each group has managed to preserve its own identity. Some
among them, indeed, devised abstract systems of thought devoted to the
perpetuation and preservation of the uniqueness of each kind of social
identity. Systems for sorting and categorizing all forms of life, and of
mankind, according to degrees or levels of pollution, rested upon rituals
of birth and lineage. This process led to an intricately complex system for
maintaining cultural and ethnic distinctions.

In metaphorical terms, the Indian continent can be likened to an enor-
mous cauldron with its mouth open to the north-west. Into the mouth of
this cauldron have come many, if not all, fresh groups of people, each with
its own distinctive cultural imagination, energy, and vitality. In a process
that took thousands of years, each new people added some new spice or
tincture to the ethno-cultural brew. New peoples came from the north,
from the bracing and windswept steppes of Central Asia. Like the herds of
cattle and horses they drove before them, they gradually settled among
softer and less aggressive peoples. Coastal and riparian climates and soils
yielded more abundant natural products and brought bountiful benefits
from commerce. But high humidity and heat and diseases, especially
among coastal peoples of the extreme south, also tended to make manual
labour terrible, sapping energies and shortening lifespans, so that involun-
tary or forced labour became a dominant feature within agrarian systems.
Indeed, enervating climate may have generated an abhorrence for manual
labour among ruling groups within agrarian economies. Invading peoples
coming into India from the north-west would enter and then settle into the
Indo-Gangetic plain. Then, as new invaders did the same thing, older
groups subsequently moved eastward and southward, slowly spreading
themselves and their rule. While each new people superimposed itself
over layers and tiers of previous rulers and earlier peoples, all sought to
preserve their ethnic identity. During all these same centuries, commerce in
valuable luxury goods and potent ideas also flowed in and out of the
continent from seaports along the entire coastline of the continent. Peoples,
cultures, and civilizations from India flowed into Sri Lanka, Burma, and the
islands and mainlands of South-East Asia. Christianity probably first arrived
mainly by sea, with fresh Christian communities and cultures coming into
India century after century. Similar processes also brought Jewish commu-
nities to India, some of them having arrived long before the coming of
Christians, perhaps even as early as the Babylonian Captivity of 580 BC.

While we really know little about the earliest aboriginal peoples, we do
know that many hundreds of such distinct peoples, food gatherers and
hunters, still inhabit the forested frontiers and the escarpments that cut
across Central India and the slopes of the Ghats, as well as the great
mountain frontiers that completely encircle the Indian continent. Perhaps

the forest dwellers in remote and hilly frontier areas of India are relics of these earliest aboriginals (*adivāsis*). Some may be linked to aboriginal peoples of Australia. Some, with Tibeto-Mongolian features, certainly may have penetrated into the northern and eastern valleys, into what is now Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Tripura, to say nothing of intermixtures of peoples dwelling on the plains of Assam and Bengal. But these types of people, whatever their origins, long ago became marginalized and peripheral to the major cultural and political economies of India.

Scholars have used linguistic terms to identify and distinguish the two dominant types of peoples that have most clearly placed their cultural stamp upon India. The first category have been called the 'Dravidian'. These peoples are believed to have developed one of the four earliest of the river valley civilizations in the world. Known as the Indus Valley Civilization, mainly because archaeological work about this civilization has occurred there, this people evolved a sophisticated city life which flourished in India between 3000 and 1500 BC. Like cities of Sumeria, with whom they may have traded, these cities had multiple-storey buildings of baked brick, elaborate drainage systems, public baths, cotton fabrics, bullock carts, a pictorial form of writing, and a mother goddess cult. While scholars do not know how this civilization came into being or even how it met its end, there is little doubt but that its peoples were culturally advanced. Some scholars have gone on to surmise that peoples of this civilization came from roots common to Dravidian-speaking peoples of South India.

The second category is commonly known as the 'Aryan'. Long thought to have originated outside India, this view is now challenged by partisans of Hindutva historiography. Also known as 'Indo-European', 'Indo-Aryan', or 'Caucasian', virtually all of the countless invasions and migrations from the north-west during a period of 1,500 years (BC) are thought to have been composed of some strain from within this category of ethnicities. According to this view, sometime around 1500 BC, Aryans began to invade or migrate into India, bringing their herds of cattle and sheep with them. Driving light, horse-drawn war chariots with spoked wheels, these were fierce warrior peoples. They were only part of a vast series of successive migrations out of Central Asia which brought horses and chariots into the European and Mediterranean areas as well. Calling upon their gods of thunder and light-ning to give them swiftness in battle and cattle raiding, as well as victory in war, they toasted each other with intoxicating soma and mead. Flaxen-haired Aryans are thought to have been similar to their Nordic, Celtic, Gaulic, and Greek cousins and to those charioteers who took power in Egypt and Assyria and Persia. Such peoples were taller and lighter skinned, with longer heads and thinner, sharper noses.

During the many centuries which followed, other fierce peoples with similar characteristics entered India. Among them were the ancient Medes and Persians, Greeks, Bactrians, Sythians, Kushans, Huns, and Turks, each group possessing its own unique peculiarities. Some of these tides of human power were so vast that they struck Europe and India at the same time. Each wave disappeared into the 'mixing pot', the latest comers, the tallest and fairest, tending to live in the furthest north and the oldest, shortest, and darkest groups being found in the deepest south. Instead of mixing freely as individuals, however, so that they might all have lost their group identities, all these groups became self-contained units within an ever enlarging mosaic of social structures.

But it was the Aryans and Dravidians who set the tone of life in India. *Arya* means 'noble'. Because of their power, Aryans became the rulers over more numerous, darker-skinned *dasya* or 'slave' people whom they had conquered. In the then forested great northern plain, they set up many kingdoms. The heartland of their proud civilization was called 'Aryavartha' or 'Land of the Aryans', or 'Bharatvarsha', after one Aryan tribe known as the Bharatas. Those presumably Dravidian peoples who would not contribute to the New Order of the Aryans or refused to remain under Aryan domination may have moved progressively southward. Major kingdoms in the deepest south survived that were not ruled by Aryans. Yet, as already indicated, the Aryans had their own name for the south. Since they had entered the Gangetic plain from the Punjab, with the mountains on their left and with the deserts, hills, and jungles leading into the south on their right, they called those lands 'Dakshinapatha' or 'Lands to the Right'—from which we get the term 'Deccan'.

Language Settings

If appearances differ, even more do sounds. By the same process described above, the continent acquired over 200 distinct languages—and perhaps 800, if one counts dialects. Since most tongues are spoken by only a few, about fifteen to eighteen languages have been considered worthy of inclusion among 'national' languages. Again, these fall into two main families—Dravidian and Indo-Aryan.

Tamil is the oldest and most important Dravidian language. We know that it had its own highly developed literature long before the Christian era. Its antiquity is clouded in obscurity. In its loftiest expression, the 'classical' *Sangam* (*Cankam*) literature lay at the heart of a well-developed civilization. Malayalam, Kannada, and Telugu, as sister languages, are the offspring of Tamil. Both Telugu and Kannada are great borrowing languages—of the eastern and western Deccan respectively—with distinctive literatures of

their own that did not emerge until about the eleventh century. Telugus, laying claim to the ancient name of 'Andhra' for their own linguistic state, now number almost a hundred million speakers. With a very similar cursive script, Kannada has about half as many speakers as command Telugu, and has a literature of comparable richness and diversity. Finally, there is Malayalam. People who speak this tongue have lived along the Malabar coast, in an amalgamated modern state known as Kerala, a name derived from ancient dynasty of Chera Perumal emperors who ruled over them. It is within Kerala that ancient Thomas Christians were located, as also were the most ancient of Jewish and Muslim communities.

The Indo-Aryan, or Indo-European, family of languages has a complex history. The earliest peoples to enter the continent from passes in the northwest spoke a tongue related to ancient Greek, Latin, and Persian (Avestic), or later Celtic, Nordic, Teutonic, and Slavic. This, in its highest literary and sacred forms, was known as Sanskrit—literally 'divine' or 'eternal' or 'perfect sound'. In its idealized sense, it was meant to be fixed. As such it was considered to be changeless, and timelessly potent. In poetic hymns and prayers of the Rig Veda; in lengthy commentaries, philosophic, scientific, or technical works; and in heavier or lighter forms of literature, whether in stories and dramas, it became the vehicle for a vast storehouse of learned tradition. For many Sanskrit is still such a vehicle; moreover, there is not a language in India, including English, in which Sanskritic vocabulary cannot be found. Through many centuries Sanskrit was the language of the educated. Its influence can be compared with that of Latin and/or Greek in medieval Europe.

In time as Aryan rule spread over North India, more popular, localized, and syncretized blends and variations of Sanskrit developed which were neither fixed or sacred. These local tongues, known as *prakrits*, were spoken by the common people. In the sixth century BC, the Buddha used one of these *prakrits* for conveying what he saw as cosmic truths so that simple people could understand his teachings and so that he could break the monopoly over learning which was held by Brahmans, or men of the priestly class who controlled the use of Sanskrit. In time, however, as Buddhist learning was written into books, Pali also became somewhat fixed and sacred like its Sanskrit parent. Still later, further common tongues arose in each region, for the daily use of ordinary people. These 'post-prakritic' languages, definitely not fixed, broke up and changed as they came into contact with influences and languages conveyed by newcomers and more recent migrants, or with hitherto untouched peoples whose languages were Dravidian. Some time between AD 100 and 600, as more peoples entered the continent and as the old prakritic languages fell apart, hybrid forms of medieval and modern Indian languages emerged.

The tongues spoken were forerunners or prototypes of modern Hindi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Bihari, Bengali, Nepalese, and Assamese. Each language formed around pre-existent languages of a locality and a people having its own peculiar historical circumstances. Each borrowed, begged, or bent such words as were handy for its own purposes. But, even while these tongues were good for 'everyday' speaking, classical Sanskrit became even more important and ever more intricately complicated and rarefied. It remained the language of learning for the devout and the scholarly—mainly the monopoly of Brahmans.

If this was all that there was to the languages in India, this story would be less complicated. Yet another exceedingly important branch of languages, representing a thousand years of influence by monotheistic cultures, further complicates the linguistic landscape. Nor was this brought to India only by early Jewish and Christian communities who, since ancient times, had been coming by sea and settling along the western coasts and who, while speaking local languages, also preserved and utilized Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac texts for their liturgies and rituals.

The most massive infusions of such languages, with monotheistic vocabularies, came from Muslim communities who spoke and wrote in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. Three centuries after the advent of Islam in western India, Turkish peoples arrived who worshipped in Arabic, spoke and wrote Turkic Urdu within their military encampments, and employed Persian for their administrative records, as well as for decorative poetry, music, and polite conversation. Until the end of the nineteenth century, Persian remained, with Sanskrit and Tamil, yet another 'classical' language. For aristocratic classes in the sultanates and kingdoms of medieval India, Muslim and non-Muslim India alike, this high-flown and flowery vehicle for record keeping and official communication added to it such words of religion and government as were needed.

Yet Persian, like Sanskrit, was too lofty and hard for the common people to learn or use in daily life. Ordinary soldiers, coming to India in search of fortune, used their own rough 'camp language'. In daily contact with ordinary peoples of India, who spoke old Hindi, and with high court officials who spoke Persian, they freely borrowed such words as were useful. The new amalgam that resulted was called 'Urdu'. This was a Turkic word for encampment, from whence we also get the word 'horde'. In time this amalgam, with its hybrid culture, became the common language for both camp and court. Indeed, it came into general use throughout much of the north and the Deccan, where it was known as 'Dakhni', especially among Muslims. Non-Muslims of the north spoke much the same language, but with a greater number of Hindi and Sanskrit words. Urdu was written in a Perso-Arabic script and Hindi in Devanagari (or *Sanskriti*) script. When the

British became rulers, they used the name 'Hindustani' to describe the whole amalgam of modern Hindi-Urdu. If India ever had anything closely resembling a pre-modern lingua franca, especially before the coming of the British, it was 'Hindustani'.

Finally, the linguistic landscape would not be complete without dealing with the profound influence of European languages, especially Portuguese and English. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, no person who engaged in trade along the shorelines of the continent could manage very well without employing an agent. This person, often called a *dubashi*— meaning 'two-language person'—was a broker or go-between who possessed a commanding knowledge of Portuguese or Persian-Urdu, as well as other local languages. The languages of the Dutch and the French, who, with the Danes, failed in their efforts to win more than a tenuous foothold in India, never gained enough influence outside of their coastal enclaves, in such places as Pulicat and Pondicherry and Tranquebar, for them to make a deeper and wider impact upon cultures of the continent. English, on the other hand, eventually became the most pervasive major language of modern India, not just among rulers but among commercial, industrial, military, and professional elites. However, the name 'English' is not altogether or exactly accurate, since the influence of English upon all of the languages has been profound.

Properly speaking, English has become the latest (or fourth, after Sanskrit, Tamil, and Persian) 'classical' language of India. This 'classical' idiom is matched by a more popular, 'prakritric' kind of English that ought, more properly speaking, to be called 'Indish'. Thus, just as Hindustani, or 'Hindi-Urdu', was close to becoming the universal tongue for North and Central India, English-as-Indish is now close to being the language of elites for the entire continent. To make such an assertion is in no way to suggest that most people, or even a bare majority of peoples within each country, know this kind of English. Indeed, perhaps no more than 15 per cent of all peoples in the continent would be able to command even enough of a smattering to get along. But the proportion of English speakers that can be found throughout the entire subcontinent is significant. They are the most modern and most highly educated. They are the ruling elites, not only of India, but also of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In addition, many poor and illiterate peoples in the big cities know varying amounts of Indish-English. Because English has become the common speech of the educated throughout the entire continent, it is essential for preserving constitutional government, for civil administration, and for national unity in each country. At the same time, without a common knowledge of English, it is hardly possible for the peoples from various parts of India to talk to each other. This same knowledge has not only made it easy for Americans, Australians,

Britons, and Canadians, as well as Europeans, to get along in the country, it gives enormous advantages to diasporas from India who have migrated throughout the world. Thus, ironically, like Sanskrit and Persian in previous ages, English is the language of learning.

Ramifications of the role of English are not only enormous, but increasingly so. First, in this connection, it is important not only to reiterate that English serves as the cement that holds each country in the continent together, but to emphasize that this English is not exactly the same as the language which is used within Britain or North America. In fact, 'Indian-English', or 'Indish', is quite different from the English that is used anywhere else, and becoming more so every day. It has become a genuine language in all of South Asia. Having been used by Indians for more than two centuries, one should not be surprised to find that the process in the *Indianization* of English has reach a point where thousands of words from Indian languages, especially from Hindustani and Tamil and Sanskrit, have crept into common, everyday Indian-English. At times someone from abroad would hardly be able to understand this language. Beyond the baffling accents, with heavy use of retroflex consonants, Indian word content can be so high that English speakers from other countries can find themselves lost. This, indeed, is a danger even for the reader of this book. Furthermore, even familiar English words and expressions possess peculiarly and uniquely 'Indian' meanings and utility, with different kinds of Indian-English slang adding to the confusion. No modern writer of Indian English, among scores of world renowned writers, is more adept at capturing fine nuances of this new kind of language than Salman Rushdie. But, at the same time, so many modern Indian writers in English have won prizes and world renown that this new vocabulary is invading other parts of the world. At the same time, just as a large number of English words, including the latest slang expressions, have crept into the everyday speech of ordinary Indian peoples, so also Indian words have now circumnavigated the entire globe. How much this is so can be seen by a cursory glance at recent editions of *Chambers's English Dictionary*. In short, much as the *prakrits* developed out of Sanskrit and as Urdu (or Hindustani) developed out of Persian, so one can foresee a day when a new common language readily spoken and read will have become universal. Thus, for example, for over three centuries, many Indian words have also heavily infiltrated every other form of English. Such words as *khaki* ('earth-like'), *bazaar*, *bungalow*, *curry*, *divan* (a low seat for a *diwan* to sit upon), *calico*, *muslin*, *thug*, and *punch* (anything with five elements, like a drink or a five-fingered fist) are just a few among hosts of such words. Riding breeches or *jodhpurs*, a garment with leg coverings that are tight up to the knee and baggy to the waist, are but one example of a traditional Persian-Turkish garment named after a Rajput state. *Pyjamas*,

commonly used as sleeping garment, combining two roots *pa* (for 'feet') and *jama* ('gather'), are a loose (*salwar*) variant of what, like *jodhpurs*, are used for riding a horse. Both forms enable one to modestly 'gather-up-one's-feet' for bed. As the following chapters will show, the historical and theological and ecclesiastical significance of the role of Indian English, both within India and within the Christian world, has also been enormous.

Kinship Settings: A Classical Stereotype

As already indicated and to be repeated often within this study, the bedrock of human life in the continent consists of large numbers of distinct and separate ethnic communities that, by strong traditions, have not and do not intermarry or even interdine. This being so, amidst all the wild profusion in varieties of peoples, the individual who is constantly surrounded by crowds who speak, dress, act, and think differently must know how, as a solitary social atom, human relationships with other human beings can be forged. In a universe of peoples, each and every single person must know his or her kind. As a social being who cannot happily live without the company of fellow beings of the same kind, it is important to know the limits of proper or comfortable relationships. Crowds are not company or companionship. For a solitary individual who is mingling among hundreds or thousands of others, as in a crowded railway station at rush hour, bustling crowds can make a person feel very lonely and isolated. It is important for every human to feel a sense of belonging—to know who are one's own people and what is one's own proper place. Basic human belongingness, as refined in timeless traditions, long ago became stereotyped. While every individual instance differed in unique ways, what is described here can be seen as a classical form.

At an elemental level, common features of social contact are used to measure how close one can be to someone else. In physical, moral, or social terms, the individual needs to know: (1) whom he or she might dare to touch, whether casually or intimately in circumstances of fun or of grief (whose caress, kiss, or pat does one want to feel or whose casual touch can be instantly offensive); (2) with whom he or she might properly sit to share food or drink; and (3) upon whom he or she can count for support and help when in dire straits or in struggles of life, with whom one can work, or go to war, shoulder to shoulder. Most immediate points of social contact, matters that define kith and kin, social rank, or satisfactory and secure habitation—a place where one can live and work with comfort and ease that makes one feel a sense of belonging—are matters that are dependent upon institutions beyond one's own control.

The primary determinant of 'belongingness' is birth. The Sanskritic word for birth is *jāt*. There is no being that lives and breathes that is not defined by its own distinctive *jāt*—whether bird or beast, fish or fowl, insect or serpent. Among beings defined as belonging within the category known as 'mankind' (*manisha*), each 'birth' belongs to an elemental 'family' of beings that share the same elemental lineage or caste (*jāti*). What has long been remarkable about some 'high-born' families of India, including some Christian families, has been their extraordinary strength, if not size—and the means by which such strength and size have been achieved and preserved down through many centuries.

Strong, long-lasting, and powerful families and lineages, sometimes called 'extended' or 'joint' families, in contradistinction to those in the West that are 'unitary' (consisting only of father, mother, and immediate children), possess elaborate vocabularies to designate different kinds of grandparents, uncles and aunts, and cousins, including 'cousin-brothers' and 'cousin-sisters', that lie outside the bonds of parenthood. All birth-linked persons beyond the parental circle are also deemed to be 'family'. This category includes all married children and grandchildren, even great-grandchildren, as well as all grandnephews and -nieces and -cousins—all, within an agrarian community, who live with their common living ancestor under the same common roof. The sense of common belongingness is meant to persist for, at the very least, as long as common parents are living—but hopefully longer. Within the common rectangular enclosure of a traditional house, which often is a compound or quadrangle of adjoined houses around a courtyard and common cowshed where all sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons can ceremonially join together ritually to offer balls of rice (*pindas*) to feed common dead ancestors, bonds of loyalty to common 'birth' (*jāt*) can be incredibly strong. As many men as share in this rite of feeding the common dead ancestor could be deemed to be members (*sapindas*) of the same 'family'. They, their womenfolk (including widows, if not their girlbrides), and their offspring, together with all servants, serfs (menials or slaves), and clients, and even their occasional apprentices and students who are in training to learn a family's special 'sacred-and-secret' skills or hereditary occupation—indeed, all who are under the authority of the family's oldest living male (or males) who, at least nominally, is head of the house—are part of the same family. Birth-linked families that, due to size or tensions, might have broken away to form separate units remain, over time, parts of a common lineage. While this feature is perhaps by no means unique to India, it is of such importance that it is nearly impossible to understand Christianity in India without taking this factor into consideration.

Quite obviously, extraordinary discipline and effort has been required to keep 'birth bonds' of family strong. In traditions that hark back to ancient

times, this kind of family has been bound together by a frame of iron. The frame has been, and can be, both a comfort and a curse—depending upon circumstances of personal relationship and situation. Prior to modern times, this kind of family provided most of the 'social security' benefits people now receive from governments. Family care, in other words, was expected to cover or protect one's own people from before birth until after death, and beyond. All the sick, the halt, the blind, the malformed, the lazy and good-for-nothing, the spoiled and the pampered as well as the aggressive and the ambitious, together with the widows, orphans, jobless, and old-timers and pensioners: all persons who shared a common DNA could find shelter within the common family.

On the other hand, escape from such a family was unthinkable. From one's birth onward, the individual learned that, unless bonds were violated in one terrible way or another, such bonds were not just for life, but for eternity. Under the all-powerful elders and/or heads of the house, and under such of their siblings who still remained within the house, there exists an intricately arranged ladder of power and ranks, a hierarchy of station and influence, controlled by one's place within the family. Each person was expected to know just where to fit within this order of ranks, much of which depended upon 'birth', as measured in terms of generation, age, and gender. To rebel against the family was to turn against one's own kind—against one's very own 'birth'. Worse, it was to rebel against the cosmic order (*dharma*), and against the gods. It was to find oneself thrown out of home into outer darkness.

A cursory glance at dynamics of a stereotypical life in a respectable family, with special reference to the place and role of women, first in the north and then in the south, can serve to illustrate how family strength could be reinforced by traditions. A girl child, from birth onwards, would quickly discover how completely she was surrounded, and how profoundly en-meshed, within the matrix of family obligations. In customary terms, no mother would have borne her infant simply for herself, nor even only for her husband. A 'mother', as a vehicle through which another life came to be brought into the family, for the sake of the family became a centre of family attention. Both parents, mother and father, would be bound by hoary and set customs, from which there could be no escape even if this were wished. Family members, friends, and neighbours from far and near would attend to details of a child's birth with great interest. Astrologists would be consulted, to make certain that every detail in the child's horoscope was being accur-ately noted and recorded. From birth onward, through special occasions of life and until long after death, there would be a calendar of ceremonial and ritual events. Such rites would include those of purification, of naming, and of initiation, each following the next with steady, clocklike regularity for

the rest of a person's life. Beyond daily bathing and ablutions, whether the particular ceremony of the moment concerned the piercing of ears, the tying on of sacred thread (in connection with a boy's *upanayana* ceremony, usually at the age of 8), the commencing of school or occupational training, the celebrating of marriage, or various of the four stages (*ashram*) of life, even to the performance of funeral rites, oldest members of household, those venerated for their experience and knowledge, would be expected to spare no time nor expense to make absolutely sure that everything was being done properly. Exact worship (*puja*) and/or correctly pronounced incantations or prayers (*mantras*) would be required to accompany each and every step of a person's development and progress or life on earth, from birth to death. Only the elders can be trusted to know what is 'right' and 'best'.

What applied to high-caste boys differed from what applied to girls in ways no less significant. At about the age of 8, a boy of respectable birth would be initiated formally into the first important stage of life, that of being an apprentice or student. From that time onwards he would begin to learn and remember all of the stored-up knowledge of the family's past, all of the crafts and secrets of the family, all of the precious heritage which makes his own 'birth' and his own people different from other kinds of 'births' and peoples. All this would have been passed down, from father to son, for generations, if not centuries untold. A boy would be introduced to his own personal *secret-and-sacred* duty (*dharma*)—and told how only by being true to his own birth can he ever hope for any better destiny after death. No matter what his family origin, whether high or low, noble or ignoble, grand or menial, the need to guard special personal and family secrets, about his own unique niche in the universe and his special task on earth, would be mandatory. About this there could be no choice, nor would his family have had a choice. His cosmic destiny or *karma* would have been seen as fixed. These facts of life one could only accept. To do otherwise was dangerous. This perspective was enshrined in tradition.

Domestic destiny for a girl from a respectable family would be just as fixed and potentially rigid as that of a boy, if not more so. But, at least in custom and doctrine, almost everything would have been the opposite of what could be expected from a boy. If the birth of a son brought gladness, the birth of a daughter could evoke sadness and tears. If he were on the right, she would be on the left. If he were positive, she would be negative— a source of anxiety, expense, and heartache. While he acquired family secrets, she could be excluded—and prepared for the time when she would leave home to live with total strangers. While he would be obliged to work hard, to learn discipline, and to prepare for eventual responsibility, she would be more free from such cares and burdens. All around her,

relatives would know that, once sent to live in another home, she might very well become a household drudge.

Marriage was what changed everything, especially in the life of a girl. For a female of respectable family, marriage was the really and truly important event of life—with all sorts of unknown possibility and potential, whether for good or for ill. In North India, the rules of marriage handed down from *Sanskriti* traditions were many hundreds, if not thousands, of years old. Betrothal and marriage, for example, could not be arranged with anybody within her father's lineage, nor with any of her mother's grandchildren, nor even with any children of her father's sisters or cousins. To be proper, a marriage had to be arranged with someone of the same biological *jāti*—caste (breed or genus)—who, at the same time, was removed by at least seven degrees (steps or generations) from one's father and at least five steps from one's mother. Among 'high-caste' or 'respectable' people, anything closer would not be seen as marriage but as incest. While a daughter was still very young, perhaps even an infant, her family members would have begun to search far and wide for a boy from a family having an entirely different clan (*gotra*) name. A boy's family would have been doing the same.

Usually, not counting their own *gotra*, efforts would be made to choose someone from some family within one of eleven other *gotras* that made up the entire caste community or *jāti*. In some caste communities that many *gotras* might no longer exist, some having long ago become extinct. If and when, at long last, a prospective marriage partner were to be found, parental families would then be obliged to consult with astrologers to determine whether such a match fell within the bounds of what might be called 'auspicious' circumstances and portents.

Traditionally, a marriage in the north, as well as east and west, would take a girl away from familiar surroundings to a different, sometimes far distant village. The family of the groom would come to the family of the bride for the ceremony. Since the families of the bride and groom would normally have been complete strangers to each other—and sometimes anxious to put all ceremonies behind them—the event would be the high point of the bride's life. Her family would have spent as lavishly as possible, sometimes going into debt for years—doing so, if only to be able to uphold the honour and pride of her family, in the presence of other families and communities. If the bride happened to come from a 'good' and 'higher' or more 'respect-able' family, her people would have done all in their power to make a grand impression among all observers. She would be loaded with finery and jewellery, and resources that served both as her dowry and as a reserve against possible hard times in the future. In addition to cotton and silk saris, as well as bangles, anklets, and necklaces, the bride would be equipped with as many household and kitchen implements as her family could afford. If, on

the other hand, her family were not so fortunate, and were unable to provide so lavishly, such lack of honour would be noted and her future might not look so bright. In fact, under the worst kinds of conditions, a family that might have fallen into dire circumstances might even be obliged to take a contribution—a 'bride price' (of perhaps a couple of bullocks)—in exchange for her. Whatever the case, whether rich or poor, respectable or less than respectable, festivities of a wedding normally took three days, in which there would be feasting and fun. The bride would taste the ritual sugar and, with her betrothed, would thrice circle the sacred fire. He would fasten the marriage *thali* (necklace) around her neck. Then, after the dust was settled, the newly wed bride would be carried off to a 'far' country, there to pass her life among 'strangers'. Many would have been the plaintive songs, sentimental ballads, and wistful poems that reminded people of the pathos of this kind of parting between a young bride and her parental family.

Marriage in South India, on the other hand, generally seems never to have been such a traumatic event. Instead of being founded upon a system in which the family of the groom's father dominated the social structure—on terms that were patrilinear, patriarchal, and patrilocal—marriage rules in the south would usually tend to be based upon the lineage of the groom's mother. This matrilinear system seems to have been a much older system than that which had evolved from Sanskritic traditions. Since the Sanskritic traditions were themselves, as already indicated, thousands of years old, the origins of the southern system vanished into the obscure mists of even greater antiquity. The southern system, sometimes called 'cross-cousin' marriage— also rested upon a regular formula for preferable and proper marriage. According to this system, a girl could not be married to her mother's younger brother, nor to a son of her brother, nor again, finally, to a son of her father's sister. Since negotiations, however, would be between people who had long been closely related and who had already known each other very well, this kind of marriage would have tended not to be such a shocking or tense or traumatic event. Indeed, a wedding ceremony within this tradition could well be turned into a grand family get-together or reunion, an occasion when one could see all one's near and far relatives.

Stereotypes pertaining to the internal dynamics of traditional relationships within families with special reference to respectable families in the north would not be complete without describing the classic role of such a woman. Within her 'new' family, the family of her husband's parental family and close relatives, a bride would very quickly have to learn how a prescribed, somewhat rigid, set of expected roles would determine how she should relate to each person. Each and every person, she would discover, would already have assigned her customary place and role within a 'pecking order'

among other places and roles. Within an assumed, albeit silent set of behaviours, a hierarchy of defined dominance and obeisance would determine 'tension-of-joking' relationships. Just as she had once bowed before her father and mother when she was a child; just as she had paid homage to the family elders, to the ancestors, and the gods; and just as she might once have learned to venerate implements, tools, and teachers who helped to perfect her special skills; just as she had been taught to venerate loftier lords who ruled over her village or over distant kingdoms or empires: so now she would put her forehead onto the feet of her husband. Thus, if her husband were her god, his parents and elders were greater gods. If she were expected to render obeisance to those above her, so also those below her were expected to render obeisance to her. Many an ancient aphorism—such as: 'Father is heaven and true religion; if Father is satisfied, the gods are happy; but Mother (Motherland) is even [stronger] or superior to Father'—would drive basic lessons deep into one's bones. On the other hand, the bride-cum-wife-cum-mother-to-be would possess an aura of potential power that was more immediate and earthy, if not also mysterious. The woman, like any family god, had to be protected from pollution—if only for the sake of family honour and pride.

While obeisance before deity arouses awe, it could also evoke two kinds of response from immediate members of the husband's family. With some only tension could ever be expected. With others, one could expect ease, fun, and joking. War and peace within each family would thus be expected to evoke a precisely arranged and choreographed pattern of responses within the family circle. This pattern was so intricate that it cannot be fully explored here. It could be explicated, as well as replicated, in elaborated ideas about political relationships—whether between families, between castes, between villages, or between kingdoms, provinces, and empires—as found in the ancient *Danda Niti* or in the *Arthashastra* of Kautiliya.[1] A person would be obliged to understand that, at all times, there would always be persons within the polity from whom trouble was to be expected and predictable, people to be avoided as much as possible; and there would be persons from whom one could usually, if not always, expect comfort and help. The pattern was as old as families themselves. Everyone, in one way or another, would also be expected to know it.

The classic role of mother-in-law, only occasionally abandoned by those that were especially astute and far-sighted, was one that would be at odds

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[1] John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India: A Study of Kingship from Earliest Times to A.D. 300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 156–9, describes how, in exercising the crafts of *mandala-nyāya*, as distinct from *matsyanyāya*, an elaborately arranged pattern of diplomatic relationships could be extended to forty-one circles or spheres. There is a sense in which politics within a family was a training ground for larger arenas of politics.

with a young bride. A new bride would know that she had a potential friend in her husband's father. But her husband's mother, by the same token, could be expected to become her foe—a tyrant who ran the house, someone who ruled over all females in the family, and someone whom one must be prepared to fear. The mother-in-law herself would have a long memory. She would remember how she too had once been a helpless, forlorn, and bewildered young bride, a stranger bossed around by older women. But it had not been until she herself had given birth—not to any child but to a son, someone who could put the burning coal on the lips of his deceased father and who could then light the funeral pyre that would usher his father into his next life—not until then had her position become secure. Not until then had she ceased from being seen as merely a bride. The transition from bride to mother had been enormous. Her son had become her insurance, her hope for a better treatment and a better life, a life with increased standing and power. By doting and spoiling and spanking and coddling, she would then have tried, by all the means and wiles at her command, to shackle the emotions of her son to herself. Every ounce of her energy and skill would have gone into this enormously important task, at least for her personally, of making a 'mama's boy' out of her infant son—someone who would be hers, body and soul. Later on in life, as he grew in stature and strength, and after the sacred thread was ceremonially tied, signifying that he was twice-born, he would need her help as he himself began his own struggle for assertion of self-identity, recognition, and power, first in relation to his own father and then increasingly within the wider family. After other sons had been born to her and after her own husband gradually also began to become more dependent upon her, rather than upon his mother, for his happiness, her position as wife-mother would have become supreme. Tensions and jeal-ousies between sons, and between sons and husband, would then have opened an arena in which her own diplomatic skills in deftly handling each and playing off each against the other would have helped to bring her to the pinnacle of influence, if not power, within her family. Of course her husband would always have been her lord (*prabhu*). The respectful fear of him which she would have inadvertently inspired in her sons, and the tensions generated therewith, would have been of such a nature that all would compete for her support and affection. She would then have be-come, in the grandest sense of the world, *the* Mother—if not even one among myriads of divine incarnations of the many-armed *Mahadevi* or *Mahashakti*.

Not surprisingly, therefore, this kind of Mother, after years of painfully, skilfully, and assiduously working her way up to such a position of power, then confronted the young bride of her son. Such an event could sometimes inspire feelings of dread. She herself would have become *the* Mother-in-

Law. After all of her hard–won gains, she would begin to see the bride become a potential challenge if not a threat. Inevitably and ultimately after her own hard tutelage, the new bride herself would begin to gain ascendancy and influence within the household. This would occur when the bride became the mother of a son. If and when the mother-in-law's husband then died so that she became a widow, her life would be seen as over. That being so, she was expected to don white and become relegated to shadows and corners, not meant to be seen nor to be heard; and her son's wife would then begin to prevail in the affairs of the household.

The cycle then would have come full circle. Viewed in cosmic terms, a widow was never to marry again. Her very identity or soul (*atma*) was bound to that of her husband. Thus, remarriage would not only be unthinkable, but a violation of one's own cosmic *dharma*. Marriage, after all, was not just until one was parted by death, but for all eternity. Husband and wife, in a cosmic sense, were one being, one soul or essence (*atma*). By tradition, a faithful wife, once widowed, would become a *sati* or 'true wife'—that is to say, be burned alive upon the funeral pyre of her husband. If, by circumstance, she did not accompany him into the next life, she had no earthly alternative but to become a 'walking corpse'. A widow from a respectable (*sa-varna*) family would shave her head, wear only the cheapest and plainest white sari, like a simple one-piece shroud without a blouse (or *choli*). She would be expected, henceforth, to live in extreme austerity—to fast and pray, do hard work, to never be seen, and certainly not while eating her simple single daily meal in strict seclusion. If, by any chance the widow happened to be a young girl—someone not yet even capable of bearing a son to call her own—life would have ended before it had begun. For a child bride wed to an old man, such an event was inevitable. For others the wheel would have turned. For the child bride-widow, the wheel would never have turned. (See Chapter 13, on Pandita Ramabai, for further elaboration on this theme.)

Socio-structural Settings: Varnāshramadharma

Incest defined the outer bounds of domesticity, limits beyond which no proper marriage could be perceived as proper or pure. No domestic unit or family (*kula*) could confine marriages to persons within its own ranks. But, for the sake of ritual purity, all had to come close to this boundary.[2] If, then, the respectable family had to go outside its immediate bounds for wives

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[2] Kamala Ganesh, *Boundary Walls: Caste and Women in a Tamil Community* (Bombay: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1993), describes the Kottai Pillaimar, wherein a woman, on entering the fort as a bride, is never again allowed outside its gates, except as a corpse—thus taking extreme measures to preserve ritual purity.

and/or send its daughters as brides for others, the question of how far outside it could go without loss of purity or to avoid pollution remained of paramount importance. Among high-caste communities, the outer limits of marriage had to be confined to those outside the family or lineage (*kula*) who were still considered to belong to some 'kith and kin' of the same 'cow-shed' (*gotra*) within the same 'birth' group, or caste (*jāti*). Within the same castes–genus, individuals of different families (*kula*) could still share a common meal—and drink from the same well. Quite often this also meant that such men shared the same kinds of hereditary occupation. To go beyond such limits was to bring defilement and pollution. To intermarry or interdine beyond such limits was to cause biological degradation and cosmic confusion—and thus, to disturb the moral order (*dharma*), and, therewith, to invite disastrous consequences (*karma*).

The extended group of clans or kin (*gotra*) within which different families (*kulas*) could still safely arrange marriages; ingest the same meals and liquids; and share some similar, possibly hereditary, sacred and secret occupational skill, was its *jāti*—its common breed, 'caste', and 'blood' (i.e. same genome, or species). In the strictest possible sense, therefore, a *jati* was a 'birth group' or 'caste' and, as such, all within it shared a common lineage and common single ancestor. The fact that the term caste has, in our day, sometimes been referred to as a 'sub-caste' because it is within a cluster of similar *jātis*—or castes that were seen as a virtually identical 'caste-cluster' or 'super-caste'— sometimes causes unnecessary confusion. This confusion is compounded when the term *varna* is also made equivalent to caste. Thus, 'Brahman', while broadly defined as a 'caste', is technically not quite correct. A 'Brahman', in the proper sense, defines a category of castes, in which there are scores of castes. The term Brahman, in this sense, is a specific category or rank—a specific *varna* (lit. 'colour'). The *varna* for Brahmans is 'white'. Within this 'Brahman' *varna* are many separate Brahman castes. Members of one Brahman caste do not marry outside of their own caste.

Brahmans of ancient times were master classifiers of all sorts of phenomena, both animate and inanimate. They are credited with having systematically arranged all forms of mankind, all categories of castes, into one vast, overarching hierarchical social structure. This grand overarching system for classifying and ranking castes, ostensibly dating from the dawn of *Sanskriti* civilization, is called *varnāshramadharma*. As such it is a system of 'colour coding'. It is a system within which all castes that are deemed to be proper or true (*sa-varna*) are ranked. All people falling within a genuinely recognized caste belong to one of four 'colours' or 'categories' or 'classes' of castes. Each colour or 'category' is a *varna*. Arising from Vedic legends about the origins of all things, persons from castes (*jātis*) within each of these *varnas*

were carefully described and assigned proper places and ranks by such ancient lawgivers as Chanakya and Manu.

The colour of castes that ranked in the highest category was 'white'. Combining, as it did, the entire spectrum of visible colours, this colour represented and symbolized Ultimate Reality or the Cosmos ('Brahma') itself. The very word *Brahmana*, also signifying 'Cosmic Breath' (and/or 'Sound'), the root from whence our term for 'breath' was derived. Anyone born into a caste that fell within this category would be intrinsically capable and destined for tasks that called for the use of words, someone with acuity, intellectuality, perspicacity, rationality, or sublime spirituality and someone who, by nature, was both a word-smith and a number-cruncher. Persons born into a *jāti* within this *varna*, in other words, were deemed to be ideally equipped to perform tasks, whether administrative or clerical, that call for intellectual power or ritual skills. Only those who were fully learned, who could pronounce the correct word, could be expected to perform correct sacrifices, offer correct prayers, and teach correct knowledge.

Specifically, in due time, every region within the continent has had its own distinct group of separate Brahman castes. Between Telugu Niyogi Brahmans and Telugu Vaidiki Brahmans, for example, a gulf has been fixed. The former served kingdoms and empires as administrators and generals, while the latter tended, more exclusively, to be local priests (*purohits*), ritualists, and textual scholars. Between them enmity was exacerbated within the last century, when they took differing political positions on events that occurred in 1917 with respect to the Andhra Movement. Among Tamil Brahmans, the distinction is philosophical and sectarian— between Saiva (and Smartha) Aiyars and Vaishnava Aiyengars, not to mention Sri-Vaishnava, northern (*Vadagalai*) and southern (*Tengalai*) branches. Among Maratha Brahmans in the western Deccan, on the other hand, distinctions were geographic—with the older Desastha Brahmans looking down upon what they considered to be pseudo-Brahman 'Konka-nesthas', who preferred to be known as Chitpavans. Every region in India has had its own distinct kinds of Brahman communities, each a separate caste within the rank or *varna*.

The next category or *varna* is red (or crimson). This colour, pertaining to persons whom Brahmans ranked just below themselves, has been known as *Kshatriya*. Anyone who belonged to a caste within this *varna* was considered to be genetically equipped with innate hereditary aptitudes for performing deeds of courage, prowess, valour, and political rulership. Persons from Kshatriya castes were persons who, down through the ages, wielded the 'sword' rather than the 'word' (or 'pen'). They were the warriors and princes, the rulers of domains and the lords of land, occupations that called

for political skills and weapons. It was the duty of Kshatriyas, as nobles and warriors, to fight valiantly and to govern efficiently and wisely.

The third *varna* was yellow, or gold, and members within its various castes belonged to the *Vaishiya* (aka *Baniya* or *Vaniya*) category or rank. People from castes within this category both were and are the makers of wealth. Born with innate entrepreneurial skills and with special aptitudes for accounting and banking, their task was to organize businesses, pursue commercial enterprises, increase industrial production, and bring about greater material well-being, for themselves and all peoples.

Claims to Kshatriya status have been made by many peoples, with varying degrees of credibility. Few dispute claims of the Rajputs of Rajasthan to this distinction; but all over north India there are peoples known as Thakurs who make the same claim, and whose power as local landlords and princes has been exerted in ways to make this status seem valid. Yet another extremely prominent community in North India that holds extremely high *varna* status is the Kayastha who, especially under Turkish and Mughals, as well as British rulers, enjoyed top administrative and military positions. As will be mentioned below, peoples in military castes of South India, including the great ruling houses, were almost all relegated to *Sudra* ranks. As a consequence, in modern times, a gulf of animosity, resentment, and political rivalry developed in South India between Brahman castes and non-Brahmans.

Taken together, peoples belonging to all castes within the top three colours or ranks of castes became known as *dvija* or 'twice-born'—meaning that their sons, at the age of 8, had undergone the *upananaya* ceremony. As such they were peoples who had always been expected to hold the keys to high Aryan culture. (In due course, they would be the 'Hindu' elites, a term not applied to them until the nineteenth century.) Persons within castes of the top three *varnas* were those whose ritual purity was grounded within multiplex forms of family-preserved and genetically inherited 'sacred-and-secret' knowledge (of the kind alluded to above). Special knowledge, rooted in sacred blood and sacred earth, carefully preserved and passed down generation by generation—was a caste-specific sacred duty (*dharma*). Order *and* religion *and* righteousness—traits embodied or implied within the concept of *dharma*—were the fulfilment of these specific genetic attributes. Within the population of India today, those who come from families and lineages of the 'twice-born' make up no more than roughly 15 per cent of the entire population (or roughly 5 per cent in each category). Many from these ranks see themselves as constituting the very heart of *Sanskriti* civilization.

Below the 'twice-born' were peoples from castes that fell into the lowest category of *varnāshramadharma*. This *varna*, labelled 'black', applied to all

those peoples and castes who, while only 'once born', were included within the caste system. The name of this category was and is *Sudra* (pronounced *Shudra*). The task of those who fall within this category has been to serve peoples in the three *varnas* of 'twice-born' peoples that were ranked above them. Peoples within this fourth and lowest colour category (*varna*) or rank of castes within the Brahmanical rubric of *varnāshramadharma*, while neither 'twice-born' nor ritually as pure as those born to higher ranks of castes, were nevertheless of such rank that they were permitted to occupy at least some sort of place within well-ordered societies of Aryan or *Sanskriti* civilization.

The origins of this category of castes, as traced back into the mist of antiquity, seems to have come from the time when distinctions were first made between the conquering *Arya* ('Noble') and the conquered *Dasya* ('Ignoble' or 'Menial'). A wide gulf had been fixed between conquered peoples and their conquerors whom they greatly outnumbered. To reiterate, there may originally have been only two *varnas* or categories: the 'twice-born' Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaishiyas and the 'once-born' Shudras—who may have originally been Dasyas. The rituals of becoming 'twice-born' given to boys at the age of 8 entitled them to wear the sacred thread and to learn the sacred traditions of the Vedas. Those belonging within upper classes of castes, perhaps descended from one or another of the conquering peoples who since the Aryan migrations (*c.*2000 BC) had entered the continent, went to great lengths to make sure that their own lineages were not confused with the humble lineages of the 'once-born' lower strata of the conquered peoples.

What much of the literature on this subject has never made clear is the major distinction that lies between the formal structure of proper 'caste' peoples, those fitted within *varnāshramadharma*, and the number of other peoples, in many castes and tribes, who were never even counted as proper castes. These were the non-caste or 'outcaste', meaning that their communities lay completely outside the formal caste system. Thus, one can distinguish between *sa-varna* ('true-colour') and *ā-varna* ('colourless', 'no-colour', or 'non-colour' and hence unseen or invisible) castes and peoples. In other words, below the four categories (*chaturvarniya*) of *varnāshramadharma* just described, there always existed a fifth category. Sometimes now called '*Panchamas*' or '*Fifths*', these were peoples from castes that lay beyond the pale. Peoples who were *āvarna* or 'colourless'—and ritually invisible and/or unmentionable—had always been too polluting to mingle among respectable peoples. Many societies of the world, through much of the historical past, have had slaves. But of no other society on earth could one say that as many as one-fifth of the population were viewed as innately subhuman and, hence, relegated to a permanent, hereditary, and religiously sanctioned

status of thraldom. Peoples from castes with this category were seen as dust, excrement, or filth. They were, as now known, 'untouchable'. They could not live in a *pukka* house or neighbourhood, take water from a common well, drink from a metal cup, serve food to 'purer' people, or enter a *pukka* place of worship. Not surprisingly, relegation to polluted status became a kind of social action that, in and of itself, produced pollution—resulting in a vicious circle of debasing dirt, disease, drink, and debt bondage from which there could be no escape.

The rationale for this 'colourless' or 'no-colour' (*āvarna*), socially 'invisible', category needs to be repeated, perhaps, in order to be fully grasped. Indeed, it underlies much of what is contained in this entire study. Brahmans, for millennia the master classifiers of phenomena, invented a separate category for each and every form and species of life, for every kind of 'birth'. They viewed all *jātis* outside of the ranks of *varnāshramadharma* as being innately polluting. Groups of mankind (*manisha*) that fitted into the fifth category of castes (*panchama jāti-s*) fell into two subcategories: peoples that had been domesticated (*āvarna*); and peoples so fierce, so savage and wild, that they were never conquered, 'controlled', or 'domesticated', but remained forever aboriginal (*adivāsi*). *Āvarna* peoples were nothing more than domesticated *adivāsi* peoples. People in *āvarna* castes, some thought, were formerly wild people who had once belonged among *adivāsi* 'tribes'. Those who, like wild beasts, had been tamed, had been harnessed so as to provide productive energy for the benefits of civilized or 'clean' people. These were treated like cattle or goats, horses or elephants, or other forms of livestock. Taken together, *āvarna* castes and *adivāsi* peoples—nowadays officially labelled 'Scheduled Castes and Tribes' (or 'Depressed Classes')—may have amounted to more than 20 per cent of the entire population, with their distribution depending on the regions they inhabit. (Gandhi's name for 'untouchable' peoples in *āvarna* castes was 'Harijan'—'Children of Krishna'. But Hari is a name that sticks in their throats). Their own self-designation today is *Dalit*—meaning 'crushed' or 'oppressed'. Whatever the case, the entire system, including the elite, *Sanskriti* social structure known as *varnāshramadharma*, remained exceedingly durable, despite changing military and political events. Seemingly fixed and unchangeable, even though this was sometimes actually not the case, various parts of the entire system were found to be so tightly locked together that, despite countless attacks and convulsions occurring, the system grew stronger and stronger.

Not only was the caste system durable, but even more remarkably, its various working parts were intricately interdependent. It was functionally interdependent—economically, politically, ritually, morally, and, indeed, in almost every sphere of human activity. What would perhaps increase the astonishment, if not the bafflement, of Europeans was the way this system

was built upon basic assumptions and beliefs about the nature of that bio-logical species that they called *manisha*, or mankind. Here, indeed, was perhaps the most sophisticated and reasoned doctrine ever devised that extolled the virtues of the intrinsic inequality of all mankind. In the name of '*varna-ashrama-dharma*', here was a point of view in which one concept seems to have been missing, or at least recessive: namely, any generally accepted notion of the existence of a common humanity (or *Sadhâranadharma*)—a concept of intrinsic dignity that applied to all peoples.

But, of course, *Sanskriti* theory is one thing and practice another. Actually there had never been any single place in all the continent of India where the idealized social structures of *varnāshramadharma* actually existed, except in the imaginations of the Brahmans who had invented the system. This apparent contradiction, or discrepancy, confused Europeans many centuries ago. It still causes confusion. Almost any Indian whom one might ask will intone the *sloka*: 'There are four *varnas . . .*' The ideal social order (*varna-ashrama-dharma*) is well known. Moreover, almost every person knows exactly where he or she, in his or her opinion, ranks within this idealized paradigm. But few will deny that there is no region of India in which the actual social order is the same—or comes close to perfectly reflecting this ideal. In a continent comprised of perhaps some 2,000 to 3,000 distinct castes, each ethnically exclusive, names of actual castes and opinions about relative ranking orders can be remarkably different.

On an all–India basis, while the number of people who are Brahmans may come to about 5 per cent, the numbers of *Panchamas* (untouchables) comes closer to 20 per cent of the population. Yet, the percentage of Brahmans in the north (Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, and UP) has been higher than in the south where Brahmans, while far fewer, have enjoyed a much higher status. Some suggest that may be due partly to the fact that Brahmanical learning has tended to be much higher and more pervasive in the south than in the north—where rituals and rules regarding pollutions have been far more strictly observed, and, on the whole, where Brahmans have tended to be more influential and generally better off. Some self-described Brahman castes of the north have been so lowly and so little esteemed or ignorant that they hardly counted as Brahmans in the eyes of South Indian Brahmans.

Also, over much of the continent, true Kshatriyas have been considered all but non–existent. Only Rajputs of Rajasthan, and perhaps Thakurs in Uttar Pradesh, with some other tiny castes, such as the Rajus of Andhra, can make claims to such status that others heed. It may be that many if not most of the warrior castes of the ancient north were either destroyed or absorbed by Muslim/Turkish conquerors. Yet, it is also true that, for many centuries, Muslims certainly filled highest military ranks within kingdoms and empires of the north—with Rajputs of Rajasthan being an exception. Nevertheless,

the rise to strength during the past five centuries of stalwart Sikhs, most of them from Jat castes of the Punjab, and the survival of sturdy Jats, Marathas, and other fighting castes that are not considered to be Kshatriya belie easy or simple categorizations.

In no part of the continent did the social order differ more markedly from the Brahmanical ideal than in South India. Yet, at the same time, pollution rules remained incredibly severe within the south. The south has had its great farmer-warrior castes: the Reddis, Kammas, and Telegas of Andhra, the Vellalars, Maravas, and Mudaliars of Tamilnad, the Nairs of Kerala, and the Lingayats of Mysore (Karnataka), to say nothing of the fierce forest people, who regularly provided the archers for royal armies. None of these peoples, except possibly the Nairs of Kerala and the Rajus of Andhra, have been viewed by some as Kshatriyas. Beyond aboriginal forest people who, as such, held no place within the caste system, most of the predominant Non-Brahman castes of South India have been seen as *Sat-Sudras* or 'clean' Sudras, by Brahman classifiers and census takers. Hence, the caste system of the south never really consisted of more than three classes of castes: (1) Brahmans, numerically very small but remarkably influential; (2) Non-Brahmans, including small Baniya (Vaishiyas) trading communities, who have ruled the land since ancient times and have remained powerful; and (3) Untouchables or 'Outcaste' peoples who remained more heavily concentrated in Madras, Kerala, and Andhra than almost anywhere else.

Village Setting: Primordial Political Entities

If the family (*kula*), clan (*gotra*), and caste (*jāti*) constituted the exclusive, primordial units of kinship and lineage and if categories of class or 'colour' (*varna*) have been the primary unit of ritual purity and social ranking, so the 'village'—one of hundreds of varieties of 'little kingdoms' and 'little republics'—has been the primary unit of political locality and loyalty. Members of a family might migrate and caste categories might fail to reflect social reality. But the single village, or a cluster of villages, has remained pinned to the earth—located beside a river, next to a hill, in a valley, or on the seashore. The village remained in the same spot. Even after it ceased to exist, its empty shell remained—deserted and derelict buildings, crumbling walls, overgrown wells, and temple ruins inhabited by monkeys or serpents. These remain as mute reminders of what once thrived where surrounding fields have long since disappeared into jungle and wilderness. Whatever its shape or size, each village was or still is a political entity that occupied space and possessed territoriality.

No two villages, as political domains, were ever exactly alike. One might be very large, with 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants—so large, in fact, that it was a

town or small city. Another might be very small, a tiny hamlet of only four or five huts. One might be very old, with records of important events and leading families that went back continuously for many hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Another might have been newly born or even still-born, either located on fresh, never before inhabited ground or on the ruins of an earlier village. Likewise, there were always some that had once been or still remained extremely rich, powerful, and domineering, while around them clustered others so abject and subservient that they remained socially quarantined settlements tottering on the brink of extinction.

Factors that made for differentiation between one political entity or locality and another varied widely, both in ecological and historical terms. Natural and human resources, soil productivity, climate conditions, water reserves, location such as closeness to minerals or markets, sacredness of sites that attracted pilgrims, or quality of political leadership—these were just a few of such factors. A centre of power within a rich river delta or on the sea coast might not only have grown rich from lush, highly irrigated, triple-cropped harvest seasons producing surpluses of rice and millet and fruit and vegetables; but it might also have benefited from maritime trade, overland traffic, salt making, fishing, or industrial production of such surplus com-modities as hand-woven textiles or metal tools. In addition to farming and herding, inland centres of mining, quarrying, or brick making might com-pete with pilgrim shrines. Even havens for specialized forms of 'criminal' activity possessed their own hidden redoubts and secret retreats. Some places had long been famous for certain kinds of special products, while others had always ridden piggy-back by exploiting villages around them. Some were entirely parasitic or especially privileged; however, even the most dominant of parasitic local domains provided some benefit to settle-ments that surrounded them. Cultural centres—places of learning, places of special piety, art, or music—were almost invariably connected to some famous sacred site, where there was a temple (mosque or church). Finally, at the heart of all networks of local power and influence were centres of government and statecraft, places that overawed and dominated, usually from the vantage point of a strong fortress.

Whatever its peculiar circumstances, each village tried to be self-con-tained and, as much as possible, self-governing. If some one 'typical' village could be identified, complete autonomy and self-sufficiency would have been an ideal to which it aspired, even if this were seldom fully realized. As much as possible, each political entity strove to produce its own food, clothing, tools, and comforts—or at least enough to provide for the satis-factions and security of its ruling elites and their families. In remote, forest areas, small principalities sometimes came close to enjoying complete autonomy. But, as contested space between struggling political entities

increased, such autonomy became progressively more difficult to maintain. The tendency for each micro-polity to jealously preserve its own boundaries and defend its own privileges against outside encroachment, and from outright conquest, remained deeply ingrained. A strong village celebrated its own festivals, as well as festivals common to most other villages of the country—such as Dasara, Deepavali, and Holi. It preserved its own local shrines and paid homage to its own local deities. Almost invariably, homage was offered to the village's own local goddess, a deity whom classifiers would have long since identified, by one name or another, as an avatar of the universal *Mahadevi*—the active consort of Lord Shiva.

There was a sense in which each self-respecting village, as a political entity, was a 'little kingdom' in its own right. As such, it strove to become a whole world of its own—a tiny universe to itself. It contained its own particular variant of the social order—its own *varnāshramadharma*. Within this local social order, families of different castes, each properly ranked in a ladder of status, were linked to each other by economic, political, and ritual needs and reciprocal relations. At the top was the Village Lord and his family. This consisted of staff-holding, sword-bearing, and politically astute individuals whose sway over all others and control over the sinews of village government and economy provided were unquestioned. Close to him would be the family of the Village Clerk, Scribe, or Accountant, along with persons whose skills were so crucial that such families occasionally exerted undue influence, either covertly or overtly, sometimes even challenging the authority of the Village Lord himself. The family of a second learned functionary, someone with knowledge of rituals and sacred law, could be crucial for providing advice, not only for handling disputes but, perhaps more importantly, for dealing with unseen forces and powers. Other persons of substance within the local economy were the banker-merchant-money-lender (*sahukar*), together with other families from proper (*sa-varna*), twice-born, and ritually clean elders and notables. Below the dominant ruling castes there would be a descending range of lower-status priestly, trading, artisan, and cultivating castes—including the barbers, the jewellers, the stone cutters (carvers), the potters, the herdsmen, the common ploughmen—below whom, in turn, were *āvarna* ('casteless', 'no-colour', or polluting) peoples. Located at the very bottom of the social ladder, these were the hewers of wood and drawers of water whose rank was so low and polluting that they were never allowed to live within the village itself, but were obliged to dwell in scruffy hamlets on the margins of village society.

Outside unavoidable constraints of economic or occupational necessity, communities at all different levels remained in separate quarters of the village, almost hermetically sealed off within walled enclosures which, like

a ghetto or cantonment, prevented casual contact with less respectable peoples. Rituals, marriage, eating, dress, forms of speech, and dozens of little elements of social behaviour, strictly governed and preserved within each quarter, served to enforce a structure of dominance—doing so in such a way that each person, family, and caste would know its special place and role. The Lord, his family, and families of high-caste elders would enforce their rule. If his personality was strong enough, a single person could dominate all. If the ruler was not so strong, he would be obliged to listen and consult with an informal gathering of village elders. This body—known as the 'council of five' or *panchayat*—either acquiesced or ratified decisions. Elements of the hierarchy of power within each micro-system were never quite the same in any given situation, due to constantly shifting alliances and struggles. Yet, there were instances in which some families remained dominant for many generations, if not for centuries.

As in local politics, so in economic matters, local people were, to some degree, mutually dependent upon each other for required goods and services. A customary arrangement of hereditary interdependence in reciprocal relationships, known as the *jajmāni* in the north, tended to exist in one form or another over much of the entire continent. Each person or family and community possessed its own functional and ceremonial role within the local economy. Some were born to receive services performed by others. As expected, the receivers (*jajmāns*) were the high-born, the landed gentry who came from farmer-warrior castes; the servers came from the lowly born, poorer, and weaker communities. Brahmans and Baniyas, being of high caste but usually not powerful or rich enough to hold sway by themselves, tended to occupy intermediate positions whereby they both rendered services to the gentry and received services from the lower orders. Occasionally, as in the south, Brahmans had become so powerful that, under sufferance of rulers, they themselves became lords over landed endowments—especially under special categories of grants made to their ancestors for the support of learning or for specific functions.

The idea that each birth group or caste was obliged to possess its own special function within a local domain was enshrined in laws, such as the *Arthashastra* and *Dharmasutra* that go back at least 2,000 years. As embodied within sacred writ interpreted by Brahmans, from generation to generation, such aphorisms as 'It is better to do one's own duty poorly than to do another's well' became ingrained in local consciousness. As such a system evolved over many centuries, it might have worked as follows: common landless labourers, both men and women, worked in the fields from dawn to dusk, in return for cupped hands full of grain and lentils for themselves and their families, added to which, on a festive occasion such as each New Year's Day, they would receive simple pieces of crude cloth that could be

used for clothing (such as head-cloths, loin-cloths or dhotis for men, and saris for women), in return for paying homage at the feet of their lords. Artisans, such as blacksmiths and carpenters, also performed services, both economic and ceremonial. All servants tended to have dual roles—ceremonial, festive, or ritual, on one hand, and economic, on the other. The lowliest leather worker, for example, was drum beater; the barber, as might be expected, was the bearer and spreader of news; the potter was expected to make special vessels needed for great occasions; and the washerman cleaned and ironed clothes used for such occasions. All, in turn, both exchanged, performed, and received services for and from one another. They served the Brahman priests and genealogists who, in turn, offered prayers (*mantras*), performed ritual sacrifices (*pujas*), and officiated at special occasions for purifications, weddings, and funeral ceremonies, as necessary. In this way, economic functions and ceremonial roles were interdependent. The mutually exchanged goods and services of the *jajmāni* system served to integrate the life of the entire micro-polity.

Yet, there were always exceptions to the *jajmāni* form of political economy. In villages that were not bound by *jajmāni* forms of interdependency, some people, often from outside the village polity, did contract work—either working for wages by the day or month, or by the piece. Some field labourers, who came from caste families, and most skilled artisans, such as goldsmiths, bangle makers, weavers, and tailors, sold their skills for what the market might bear. Finally, some villages had always produced cash crops and depended more on money and markets than upon *jajmāni* relationships.

Down through many centuries, within the various political economies of the continent, ways in which status based on 'birth' and 'blood' and ritual purity became linked to political and territorial domains are the warp and woof of India's history. Each political domain was a sacred domain within which endogamous communities in one locality gained strength by exploiting local resources, both natural and human. Each local domain usually also, in due course, became the fiefdom of one or more elite castes, usually consisting of one family and its lord which, at the same time, usually became subject to some greater and more powerful domain. Thus, despite being relatively self-contained and providing for its own through a *jajmāni* system of exchanging goods and services, each local polity had to come to terms with the existence of larger, more powerful and predatory forces in the outside world. These more powerful polities could threaten its very existence.

The logic by which micro-polities developed into macro-polities—into principalities, kingdoms, and empires—under the rule of various Kshatriya dynasties, with lineages claiming descent either from the sun (*surya-vamsha*) or the moon (*chandra-vamsha*), is fascinating. This logic is bound within the

concepts of *mandalanyāya*, or the 'logic of circles' or 'spheres', and *matsya-nyāya* or the 'logic of fish'. The first logic relied upon reasoned diplomacy for the building of alliances and consensual links between entities of relatively equal strength, while the second was a formula for relations between political entities of inherently unequal strength, which relied upon predatory action and raw force—invoking the *sloka* that 'a larger fish a smaller fish eats and a smaller fish a still smaller fish eats, and so *ad infinitum*'. These two logics are explored at greater length in other chapters. They could be and, indeed, were applied within families, within castes, within villages, and within larger political systems of any size or strength. Such logics applied to political dynamics of every kind and pertained to all forms of politics. As embodied within classical literature, within the *Danda-Niti* and the *Arthashastra* of Kautiliya, these described schemes by which systems of local alliances could be developed either by means of consensual arrangements or by means of raw force, but usually in some measure calling for skilful applications of both kinds of logic.

Fossils of past polities abound and can still be easily found. They are mingled within modern structures of our own time. Thus, even as money no longer moves by means of cheques but is transmitted through cyberspace at the speed of light, yet there are *hundis* or bills of credit still active that first began to circulate many centuries ago. With the gradual political integration of the entire continent, well over half a million villages that still exist were absorbed, or incorporated, within kingdoms and empires. With the rise of a single and modern imperial system and its successor national states, the tentacles of centralizing power in the form of government bureaucracies, agents of public transportation and postal services, courts and police, central planners, as well as tax collectors, have grown enormously. Yet, the old substructures, consisting of revenue-paying micro-polities, still exist. Commercial and entertainment industries have come more and more into evidence even in remote parts of the countryside. Instead of coping with predatory armies on the move, village leaders cope with political speakers and party organizers who come to capture votes from localities. While there are still old-time travelling astrologers, *sadhus*, and *sannyasis*, as well as traditional travelling circuses and theatrical groups, there are also travelling cinemas (in tents), hawkers of goods, and sellers of second-hand and new books, and newspapers. Beside the old bullock carts and horse-drawn cart conveyances, not to mention vehicles drawn by camels or elephants, roadways are now thick with bicycles, motor scooters, cars, lorries, and buses all competing with pedestrians for space on the same roads. Above all else, perhaps the bicycle (with bicycle-carried postal service) has done more to connect localities with each other. By such means as these, people belonging to thousands of separate communities, each ethnically distinct,

have become exposed to new religious ideas as never before—even as they have been able more easily to visit famous pilgrim sites and temples in far-off places. For the high-born among the families and castes and villages of India, 4,000 years of traditions and tomorrow's satellite jostle together as subjects for breakfast conversation.

Without looking at the various contexts examined in this chapter, it is doubtful whether one can fully appreciate the complexity or the unique peculiarities of Christianity in India, in all its many forms and its many histories. The varieties of geographical and physical and climatological contexts, matched by extreme varieties of human organization within virtually every other context—whether of people and language or structures of genetically inspired social and political entities—can be difficult enough to comprehend in and of themselves. To describe the multiple advents of different Christian communities, from the earliest ancient Thomas Christian communities claiming descent from the Apostle to the most recent fissiparous Pentecostal movements in various corners of the continent, without reference to these contexts, in all their varieties, is to court enormous misunderstandings and overly simplistic notions.[3]

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[3] What is missing from this analysis is any discussion of the nature and role of cities, or urban entities, in pre-modern and/or modern India. This itself is a complex subject. Suffice it to suggest that, if one looks carefully at the composition of almost any city or town of India, one will find remnants of prior village entities that have been absorbed within an enveloping and expanding larger urban structure.

CONTEXTUALIZING COMPLEXITY, II: INDIA'S DOMINANT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: *SANĀTANA-DHARMA* AND *DAR-UL-ISLAM*

The nature of high religion in India, at least as it was prior to the Islamic Hejra in AD 622 and up until the arrival of Catholic Christendom in 1498, serves as a context in which to try to understand much about the political and religious, as well as social and cultural, encounters that took place thereafter. The high culture of Brahmanical religion that was evolving had no single name. It might well be described by two words: *dharma* and *Sanskriti*. There is no single word in Indian languages that directly corresponds with the term 'religion' or 'religious'. *Dharma*—duty, order, and rightness—is a mere approximation, while *Sanskriti* describes the whole of high, or classical civilization and literatures handed down from sacred lore. Only in South India was high or classical civilization perhaps more closely associated with the Tamil or *Sangam* (*Cankam*) civilization, and its literatures, arts, and sciences. *Dar-ul-Islam* (or *dar al-Islam*), on the other hand, comprehends and embraces a fusion of all civilization, civility, and polity under a single 'Abode of Submission' to God. As we shall see, its roots, ethos, and dynamics of doctrinal exclusion and social inclusion were diametrically opposed to those of *dharma* and *karma*, at least in theory. Thus, before looking at the impact of European Christendom, it is important to have some basic understanding, however briefly described in a somewhat oversimplified form, of the contexts of classical religious traditions within which this impact occurred.

Dharma/Karma

Perhaps nowhere in the world has it been so easy to talk about life and death, about divine and eternal verities, as in India. In pre-modern times, this may also have been true over much of the world. For persons in the modern and secular West it is more safely polite to talk with a stranger about

the weather or some other mundane subject; but for many in India it is more comfortable to talk about life and death, and about things religious. Why this may be so may lie in the basic fact that, for most people in India (down to our own day), life always seemed so hazardous and uncertain—so 'nasty, brutish, and short', so to speak; and death, so certain, immediate, and even intimate. For many in America and Europe, death is remote if not rare—seldom met firsthand, and preferably forgotten—put off indefinitely to another day. Death is kept at a distance, relegated to the clean white silence of the hospital or the sweet-scented dark silence of the mortuary. What happens in road accidents, criminal violence, or battlefields is read about or glimpsed on television screens. Death, in other words, has become abnormal—a passing curiosity. But in India, as in other hazardous places, death has remained much more immediate and intimate. Death comes in so many ways—a playful lick by a rabid puppy, a burning fever, a gnawing belly, a walking skeleton, a leprous hand, or an elephant foot. Death in low and sudden forms comes along so often—by the roadside, crumpled remains of life that was once a human, a cow, a horse, or a dog. Death is carried to the funeral pyre, or signalled in the night by wailing mourners and throbbing drums. So many experiences each day are reminders that, despite all forms of splendour or squalor, death cancels life. All accumulations of earthly goods, all stored up gifts of language, memory, and wisdom, and all satisfactions and securities acquired are instantly annulled by death. From such finality there is no escape, no flight.

Maya, Brahma, and *Dharma* as Ultimate Verities

Distinctions between illusion and reality, between the ephemeral and the eternal, can be stark. Humankind, everywhere and in every age, has persistently refused to accept death, or at least the thought that death is the permanent end of a person's life. It is hardly strange, therefore, that sensitive and thoughtful persons in India, through many ages and from time immemorial, refused to accept the possibility that death could be the permanent and final end or extinction of a person. But, since life on earth was obviously not very permanent—with life and loved ones here today and gone tomorrow and with so much perpetually changing—it was preferable to conclude that things seen and heard and felt that were forever changing were not real and did not represent true reality. The world and all within it was a mirage—an illusion. The name long, long ago given to this illusion was *maya*.

But the very idea of illusion implied that, somewhere in the cosmos, there was something that was unchanging, some true reality. A thinking person might look within himself and come to the conclusion that, at the

very least, the self was truly real—that one's identity as a person was in its essence changeless. By inference, it was possible to then conclude that all other living entities had intrinsic selves or souls that were also timeless. Within the essence of each self there was something that forever transcended each birth and death, each passing of life to death. This something, this 'selfness' that was permanent and real, was one's *atma*—soul. Also by inference, one could imagine that each other being, every other life form, whether animal, bird, fish, insect, or plant, also possessed its own 'selfness' or *atma* that was real and that all life forms, taken together, might merely be separate parts of a universal reality, a Cosmic All—Cosmic Soul—which was also not an illusion, something real, changeless, and timeless. The name given to this eternal and ultimate reality was Brahma. It could be conceived of either as impersonal Ultimate Reality or as personal Divinity—as God (*Deva*). How this was understood depended upon one's perspective.

In philosophical terms, therefore, this line of thinking led to a belief that all of existence is timeless and spaceless. It had no beginning nor end—no time when it was not, nor any place where it was not. Since all of reality was limitless, any time and space which could be measured were mere figments of illusion. Such thinking was very different from traditions that had evolved in the West, especially as this emerged out of Judaeo-Christian theology. The notion of existence and time as linear—meaning that each person had only one life and this had but one beginning and ending, a before and after—was radically different from the view that each person had lived before and would, in due course, be reborn again and again, going through a cyclical sequence of lives and deaths. Since the soul was timeless and spaceless, and since it was also part of a spaceless and timeless Universal All, it was seen as migrating from body to body, or life to life, in a ceaseless process. The term used to describe this process of perpetual rebirths was *samsara*—'transmigration of the soul'. Yet, for many, the very idea that each person in some previous life might have been a fish, bird, snake, animal, or even another person—and, worst of all, someone of lower birth (*jāt*) or caste (*jāti*)—was too frightening to contemplate. Ultimate escape from *maya* and from perpetual soul migration—or release from *samsara*—was one's life quest. For the soul to be saved or freed from endless cycles of rebirth, known as *mukti* (or *moksha*), was for one's essence or self to escape from *maya* of rebirths (*samsara*) and to become absorbed—or released—into the serenity and motionlessness of All Existence that was Brahma. In a personalized sense, it was to become one with God or with Ultimate Reality.

The main issue, therefore, was how to escape from the ceaselessly turning wheels of cosmic change. This could only be accomplished by fully and properly understanding and then fulfilling one's own unique place and role within the Universe of Existence. One's own role was one's own *dharma*.

Each individual had a distinct and unique *dharma*. In one way or another, this was inevitably and ultimately linked—by the Universal Law of Causation or *karma*—to the Great or Master *Dharma* of All Existence. But to discover and know and understand exactly how to manage one's own *dharma*—and how it was linked to the Great Wheel of *Dharma*—was to acquire and gain complete mastery over those secrets of life and death and existence that related to one's own personal *dharma*. For no two persons was this *dharma*-cum-*karma* the same. (Nor was it easy for any person to get hold of the keys that were necessary for unlocking such secrets.) Each one's secrets, as also each family's and community's secrets, with knowledge that pertained only to one's own *dharma*, could only be acquired from a precious hoard of ancient lore or sacred knowledge that had been preserved and handed down from generation to generation, long before that person had been born.

It is important to again remind ourselves, in this connection, that no word for 'religion'—or 'religious'—has existed in India. What has existed within India's various linguistic traditions, in either classical or vernacular forms, has borne no direct comparison. The Brahmanical and Sanskrit word that most closely resembles 'religion', and that has been used as a substitute for it, is *dharma*. But even the term *dharma* has multiple meanings, both local and universal in character, not all of which can appropriately serve as a substitute. In its most common, everyday usage, *dharma* means 'duty', 'order', 'proper', 'correctness', or 'rightness'. As such, like the opposite side of the same coin, it is also virtually identical to *karma*—or causation. But *dharma/karma* also possesses cosmic and universal meanings so that it can be defined as the 'Cosmic Order of the Universe' ('All Existence'), or the 'Cosmic Wheel of Causation'—together with the laws that relate thereto.[1]

Origins and Evolution of Vedic Traditions

Thirty-five hundred or more years ago when Aryan peoples began to come into India,[2] they relied upon supernatural powers for victory and success. One basic element within their world view and worship called for sacrifice (*yajna*). Life paid for life, death for death, and blood for blood. A cosmic calculus of cause and effect, of power and prerogative, determined events. Properly performed sacrifice, to be effective, required properly pronounced sounds. Correct chants, incantations, prayers, and songs (*mantras*) exactly

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[1] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York: Macmillan, 1962; repr. 1963, 1964).

[2] Hotly disputed by partisans of *Hindutva* or 'Hinduness' who contend that Aryans originated within India. J. P. Singhal, *The Sphinx Speaks* (New Delhi: Sadgyan Sadan, 1963): asserts that all life began in the Indo-Gangetic plain, that the first cosmic sound was '*om*' (cosmic sacred sound).

determined what would happen. If not correct down to the tiniest detail, a sacrifice could backfire, bringing harm upon the sacrificer. So potent was the danger of making a mistake that specialists were needed. Specialists in the making of correct sounds, known by what they produced, were Brahmans. Their name was synonymous with Cosmic Breath (*Brahma* or *Brahman*) that embodied All Existence.

Brahmans were expected to transmit the exact power, in sound or breath, of Brahma. Without tapping into the very essence and meaning of Supreme Being, in Ultimate and Cosmic Reality, nothing but random futility prevailed. To avoid such an event, special and secret stores of knowledge (*vēda*)—consisting of the exact tone and tune and tempo of this sound—had to be carefully committed to memory lest even the tiniest little inflection became lost. Such knowledge of eternal verity was called *Veda. Vedas*, from the very earliest times, became the bedrock collections of sacred Aryan or *Sanskriti* traditions. Sanskrit, the very embodiment of cosmic and divine sound, was the vehicle by which an entire civilization was preserved and then transmitted down through many ages.

Vedic tradition began like a small stream bubbling from a spring high in the mountains. Like a tiny stream, it trickled down, dividing as it flowed and then spreading out into parallel and intermingling channels of specialized knowledge. The original stream, from which all else flowed, known as the *Rig Veda* (*Rg-Vēda*), was a collection of carefully sounded prayers and hymns about life and death and immortality. The three other streams of Vedic sound that flowed from it became known, in due time, as *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Arthavaveda*. As such, they were manuals conveying Knowledge about Sound, Knowledge about Sacrifice, and Knowledge about Material Well-Being. These four growing and intermingling streams of tradition, each complementing and supplementing the other three, ran alongside one another and then themselves split into further branches of knowledge that, over the course of many centuries, from roughly 1500 to 500 BC, eventually became huge repositories of special sacred lore.

The third or *Sama Veda*, emphasizing the science of transmitting cosmic sounds, explained exactly how it was possible to transmit precise sounds with amazing accuracy. Due to the extreme importance of exact sounds, from the beginning the entire Vedic tradition was completely oral, and transmitted from generation to generation, century by century, in oral form. This being so, every tiny bit of sound and every bit of knowledge about how to accurately transmit sound had to be committed to memory. This need required the development of more and more mnemonic devices. A whole science and technology of memorization was developed, so as to make sure that huge amounts of exact sound could be perfectly articulated, transmitted, and rearticulated, as and when needed. Not surprisingly, in the

process, this also became the well-spring for developing an elaborate musical tradition that, as it now exists, is perhaps one of the world's oldest classical modes of musical transmission. Only after nearly a thousand years, as more and more devices for memorizing became necessary, did a script begin to emerge. But this script also tended to be suspect, such was the need to make sure that written symbols could actually transmit the exact tone, tune, and tempo of cosmic sound. Pannini is the mythic name connected with having developed the very first scientific treatise on linguistics, in about the year 400 BC, for this purpose.

After a long passage of time, what had begun as simple rites became increasingly complicated. Each required longer and more detailed 'how-to-do-it' instructions. As sacrificial ceremonies became ever more elaborate and ornate, and ritual tasks multiplied, they required increasingly specialized skills. A dozen functions might be needed where performance of only one might previously have sufficed for a single sacrifice. An elite cadre of specialized ritualists gradually evolved and became entrenched in positions of privilege and increasing power. As these became more and more powerful, more and more professional about their work, more exclusive about their functions, and more selfishly demanding about what benefits they were to enjoy, there also seemed to be no end to what proper sacrifices might be required to assure cosmic benefits. In order to preserve their monopoly over such sacred and secret crafts, Brahmans developed ever more elaborate handbooks and commentaries, about each aspect of each sacrifice. Thus, there grew up around each of the four Vedas, collectively known as the *Chatur-Veda*, a separate collection of written works that was a veritable library. These works became known as *Brahmanas*. Each had its own recorded details and commentaries concerning how the art and science of each separate kind of sacrifice was to be performed. *Brahmanas* continued to grow in size as the numbers of special sacrifices and *pujas* also multiplied. Ultimately, there was almost no aspect in the life of a person, from conception before birth to cremation after death, that did not call for some particular and highly specialized rites. For each of these rites, the role of specialist became increasingly essential in order to assure success.

After centuries of increasing specialization, however, new generations became disgusted with the shallowness of all the rites they were being obliged to support, with their seemingly empty forms and superficial rituals, and with their multiplying demands for blood and gore. No longer willing to stand for a system run by coldly narrow and self-serving functionaries who fought to preserve it, some of the more daring began to rebel. They and their followers began to withdraw from what they saw as flashy illusions (*maya*) of the world that such sacrifices themselves represented. They

withdrew into remote forests and wilderness places, far removed from the hustle and bustle of daily life and death. Here, in their retreats, they passed their time in rigorous self-examination, discipline, and meditation. In place of the blood and fire and chanting of literal sacrifices, they performed sacrifices symbolically—within their own minds. New ideas about life and death, reality and sacrifice, developed by these forest sages, were also memorized and recorded by disciples. Eventually, collections of these ideas, called *Aranyakas* or 'Forest Books', came into being and were attached to each of the four original Vedas, each of which already had its own set of *Brahmana*s. The four parallel sets of forest sayings (*Aranyakas*), as a consequence, added elaborate sets of magical formulas, some of which were fraught with deeper mystical and symbolic elements. Finally, mystical ideas growing up in connection with each of the four Vedas also developed large sets of additional works of philosophical and rational exposition. Each of the still intermingling streams of Vedic tradition, even as they had grown ever heavier with commentaries and forest sayings, now developed its own works of philosophy, known as *Upanishads*. Because they came at the end of Vedic tradition, the teachings of these philosophical works demarcate what is often called the *Vedanta*, or 'End of Vedas'.

It is possible that the rise of the Upanishads may have been a way of defending Vedic traditions from increasingly widespread disaffection and dissatisfaction with Brahmanical domination. Rising opposition developed against the exclusive social order (*varnāshramadharma*) that Brahman theorists had devised, especially with the tightening compartmentalization of castes into their own fourfold (*chaturvarniya*) categories, and against rigidities of secret rituals and sacrifices. Of several movements that rose up to struggle against the Vedic system, either by attacking it directly or by attempting to undermine it, two deserve special mention.

The first was the path of the Buddha or 'Enlightened One'. This was begun by a prince named Siddhartha Gautama who, having become disenchanted with the entrenched system and the status quo, sought for something more. Renouncing his throne as a young man, he devoted the rest of his life to piety and contemplation. It is quite probable that his path began to evolve out of his withdrawing into the forest, in the manner of those who produced the 'forest books' (*Aryanakas*). At any rate, it was while he was sitting wrapped in meditation deep in the shade of a sacred pipal tree at Gaya that he gained his greatest insight. For the remainder of his long life, he urged his followers to adopt the 'Middle Way'—between extremes of withdrawal and wild or worldly involvement in life. When he died (*c.*483 BC) he left a dedicated band of followers. These ochre-robed monks (*bhikkhus*) and nuns wandered from place to place with their begging bowls, simple austerity, and zealous preaching of their master's doctrine. Like

Brahmans before them, they too carefully preserved the formulas, sayings, and lore taught to them by their master. As centuries passed, they gained ever larger numbers of adherents, both among common folk as well as among nobles—both in North and western India and also in South India. Perhaps the most famous Buddhist of ancient India was Ashoka Vardhana, the great Mauryan Emperor (*c*.273 BC). He is said to have so repented of his bloody campaigns of military conquest that he erected pillars all over his vast dominions, for the express purpose of saying how sorry he was for all the bloodshed and suffering his wars had caused. He also erected monasteries and *stupas* (funeral mounds containing relics of the Buddha) and sent missionaries far and wide over the whole continent, even as far as Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, the Theravada (or Hinayana) form of the Buddha's teachings would remain strong long after large numbers of adherents in India declined. From Sri Lanka, this form of teaching would be exported to kingdoms in Burma and Thailand. Eventually, adherents of newer movements broke away from teachings of the older or Hinayana ('the Lesser Vehicle') Tradition and formed sects of the Mahayana (or 'Great Vehicle') Tradition. These then spread across Central Asia and entered China and Japan. Meanwhile, both vehicles would almost completely disappear from within the land of their origin.

The second movement was led by Mahavira (died *c*.468), founder of what would become known as the Jaina path, or Jainism. A contemporary of the Buddha, he put extreme emphasis upon the doctrine of non-violence or *ahimsa*. So highly did Jains value life that some groups of them would often cover their mouths with clay for fear that they might unintentionally cause the death of invisible germs. While they would never become quite so numerous, their power in the handling of administration, banking, and commerce, money making of any kind, would be such that their influence would always be far greater than their numerical strength might have warranted. In later centuries, and down to the present, there would always be among those tiny elites in India whose genius lay in the generating of prosperity—including Jewish, Christian, Parsi (Zoroastrian), and Armenian communities.

It is possible that, as a result of the conflicts between heterodox Buddhist and Jain views and more orthodox Brahmanical institutions, doctrines of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and transmigration (*samsara*) found a permanent place within Brahmanical belief structures thereafter. Indeed, it can be argued that veneration for all forms of life, especially for the cow, emerged from the movements of the Buddha and Mahavira. It may also be possible to understand why so many high-caste people of India have been vegetarians—especially since, aside from pollution, doctrines of *karma* and *samsara* increased the taboo linked thereto.

Post-Vedic Traditions

Emerging out of the heavy mists of post-Vedic antiquity, in addition to conflicts between Buddhist, Jain, or other opponents of Brahman dominance and Vedic lore, as well as the intellectual disciplines and literatures connected to later centuries, were more mundane and popular streams of cultural influence. Among these, as sources of belief, were two streams of understanding—one drawn from the two huge, pan-Indic or epic hero-legends, known as *kathās*, that probably date from around 1000 BC; and another consisting of innumerable local pseudo-historical legends, known as *purānas*.[3] The texts of these epics and legends have generated innumerable common traditions for all classes of people. They have served as the basis for common popular hero-cults that, in consequence, have inspired religious devotion.

Of the two great epics from which almost all peoples draw inspiration, perhaps the more popular is the *Ramayana*. This is a sentimental and devotional saga, similar to an extended soap-opera. It is about how Rama and his faithful wife Sita faced various adversities and challenges to ritual purity and royal obligation (*raj-dharma*). Rama, unjustly deprived of his rightful throne and banished from his realm, wandered for fourteen years in the wilderness with his faithful Sita—surmounting innumerable challenges to his ethnic purity and regal authority. Along the way, he rendered help to pious sages of the forest and made heroic struggles against demons. But when Ravana, the king of demons, captured Sita and carried her off to his stronghold in Sri Lanka, Rama rallied an army. This included monkey forces led by their king, Hanuman. In the end, after many adventures and battles, Rama and his allies defeated his arch foe Ravana and rescued Sita. But, after being restored to his own throne, questions arose over whether Sita had been successful in fending off the advances of Ravana and whether she had been ravished. Ever since this epic came into being, in various rescensions, the *Ramayana* has retained its strong emotional and moral appeal. Rama remains the paramount model of what an ideal, noble, and benevolent king should be, both in his devotion to his own duty (*raj-dharma*) and also in devotion to his father, his people, and his wife. Sita has been idolized as the ideal of all womanhood—going so far as to immolate herself as a true wife (*sati*), rather than let her conjugal chastity come into doubt. The theme of this romance, repeatedly inspiring works of art and sculpture, music and dance and poetry, acquired a religious appeal for many respectable people. Rare would be the person who would not have known the details of this epic saga since childhood.

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[3] More serious disciplines of historical understanding were called *itihasa* and *charitra*. These both claim to represent one event after another—i.e. 'as it happened'.

The second epic, known as the *Mahabharata*, was of comparable antiquity, and retained nearly comparable popularity. Measuring 'eighteen' books[4] in its last recension (*c.* AD 400), this told the story of a sinister rivalry between two related families—the House of the Pandava Brothers, led by Duryodhana, and the House of the Kauravas. Draupadi, the heroine won by Arjuna in an archery contest, became the common wife of all five Pandava brothers. She and her mother-in-law, Kunti, shared some of the blame for having brought about the great conflict. Slowly and inexorably, tragic incidents piled up and led, eventually and inevitably, to a huge and dreadful civil war. Upon the bloody field of Kurukshetra, where the contending armies fought desperately and ferociously for eighteen terrible days, the wailing lament of women gradually increased until it was heard above the sounds of battle as they mourned over their fallen heroes. If such an epic war as this ever actually occurred, it probably would have taken place before the year 1000 BC—and may be seen as having occurred at about the time of the Trojan War.

The most famous portion of the *Mahabharata*, if not of later religious texts, was the *Bhagavad Gita*—or 'Song of the Lord'. The charioteer of Arjuna, Krishna, gave advice concerning the dilemma of shedding blood. Greatly distressed at all the killing, Arjuna expressed deep concern and considered whether or not to stop fighting. Was it better to save one's own kindred from slaughter, or fulfil one's obligation as ruler of one's own kingdom? To kill cousins was a violation of an obligation (*dharma*). But not to kill cousins when they were the ones violating the peace and fighting against his realm was also a violation of royal duty (*raj-dharma*). As the story is told, Arjun was just about to lay down his bow when his charioteer and friend, really deity in disguise, sang his song. Krishna told Arjuna that he would commit a far greater sin if he failed to do his own personal duty (*sva-dharma*) as a warrior and as a king (*raj-dharma*). His rightful role would always be to defend the kingdom and to protect its people. In a conflict of interests between two worthy aims, one's own duty to one's own obligations and responsibilities always had to come first.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, perhaps the loftiest lyric to emerge from the *Mahabharata*, combined some of the important ideas of philosophy found in the Upanishads and in the Sacred Laws (*Dharmasastras*). This segment of the epic served to reinforce a resurgent form of devotionally theistic (*bhakti*) movements that seem to have been organized in order to neutralize, absorb, and eventually defeat rival movements, such as those led by Buddhist monks and Jain sages. It was by means of such adroitly inclusive or absorptive strategies,

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[4] The number, 'eighteen', as a mythic quality, is often repeated with respect to various classics of literature and lore.

such long-lasting Brahmanical resilience and resistance, that old traditions were able to cope with rival movements. The *Gita* pointed out three possible paths by which a person could gain ultimate freedom or release (*moksha* or *mukti*) from the never-ending cycle of transmigration (*samsara*): (1) the disciplines or pathway of devotion (*Bhakti-yoga* or *Bhakti-marga*); (2) the disciplines or pathway of proper knowledge or reason (*Jñāna-yoga* or *Jñāna-marga*); or (3) the disciplines or pathways of proper action (*Karma-yoga* or *Karma-marga*). This sets forth an agnostic kind of approach to religious doctrines. It was perhaps from this kind of basically agnostic or manifold approach to ultimate salvation that the still fashionable aphorism arose, namely 'There are many ways to God [gods], or Truth. It does not matter what you believe, what path you take, or how you get there, so long as you get there.' Implicit in this approach is a recognition that, throughout the ages, many good ideas have been borrowed from others and that, since all good and true ideas come ultimately from the same original source, it does not necessarily matter how good or true ideas are acquired. This philosophical approach could be compared with the tentacles of a giant octopus that reach out to grab and digest and absorb all life forms that they touch. An approach toward opposing forms of knowledge seems to have evolved that was, in many ways, doctrinally (and politically) absorptive and inclusive—however much it was ethnically and socially exclusive. Christian, Islamic, or Jewish ideas could be absorbed and made to fit into larger cosmic explanations for all traditions. Any cult or doctrine or sect, by this logic, could be accepted so long as it did nothing to touch changeless, eternal, and established Laws of *Dharma*. This approach to truth, or Truth, would be diametrically opposite to the approach of monotheistic traditions—whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim—that always tended to be (and still remain) doctrinally exclusive and socially inclusive.

In this attitude toward life, the person influenced by Vedic and Brahmanical norms of spirituality, therefore, tended to direct daily conduct by means or with reference to a 'tetrad' (*caturvarga*) that defined the 'four ends' toward which every person would aspire: first, to pursue right duty or virtue—*dharma*; second, to acquire material advantage or gain—*artha*; third, to aspire to pleasure—*kama*; and, finally, fourth, to escape from all ephemeral or worldly interests so as to achieve ultimate liberation—*moksha*. There could be no question but that the first three ends of the soul, while they might anticipate the fourth, also excluded and precluded it. For each of these three, elaborate handbooks of law and science (*sastras* and *sutras*) were written. All were meant to help one reach the fourth and final end. Elaborate philosophical treatises dealt with the fine points. There were six proper or standard philosophical approaches that could be considered as acceptable.

But, when all was said and done, two concepts, each the flip side of the other, were paramount. As the sum and substance of all that we might fit into the concept 'religion' in India, these were *dharma* and *karma*. *Dharma* was the Law of Moral Order that bound together all existence and the entire universe. *Karma* was the Law of Universal Causation. Every event and every action either maintained or violated *dharma*; it either set up or upset the Balance of What Was Right. Every event and every action also had its own predetermined causes and consequences. Hence, *dharma* and *karma*, as opposite sides of the very same coin, were really the same. Causality and Order were integral to each other. Each and every living being was bound to its own distinct and individual Wheel of Destiny. To do one's duty and to fulfil one's role, in whatever form that might be—whether as priest or potter, treasurer or thief, bird or beast—each life form was destined to fulfil that for which it was constructed within the laws of *karma*. If and when one became reborn into a better life and if the dreary cycle of rebirths could be ended, this was something that happened when one's destiny (*karma*) was finally fulfilled and one escaped into salvation (*moksha*).

Folk Cults and Philosophical Traditions

But so far all of this severely condensed description can be seen as having outlined only the high *Sanskriti* traditions handed down from generation to generation by the most sophisticated peoples in India—namely, the Brahmans. Brahmans were the Master Classifiers and Designers of the Master Narrative. They seem always to have found ways to describe and classify everything that lived and moved. This included all of the widely disparate elements of human existence. They could see that there was a particular kind of *dharma* to fit the mentality or lack of mentality of every class, caste, and tribe. They could describe degrees of intellectual comprehension that might be possible within every kind of person, from the highest to the lowest. Not everyone, they concluded, could grasp sublime truths or trace their loftiest and most abstract forms. The low-born could not be expected to understand more than crude objects, dark superstitions, and beliefs conditioned by instinct. The lowest castes needed graphic objects to worship, such as animals, trees, diseases, and even stones. Indeed for many people, the idea of a single major principle or single God—whether monism or monotheism—could never be enough. Popular or sentimental religious traditions, as distinct from high religion, abounded with countless numbers of strange beings, gods and goddesses, demons and hobgoblins, with tantric ('magic') cults serving for the worshipping of such beings. In short, just as there was a ranking system of various peoples (*varnāshramadharma*), whose qualities were measured according to the level of competence with which

each particular caste was biologically equipped, so also there was a social order of all beings, including demons and gods.

Gradually a grand overarching pantheon was constructed that knitted together all universal and the local traditions into one huge hierarchy of divine, as well as earthly, existence. At the top was Brahma, either as first principle or as paramount deity who was Creator of the universe. Few, if any cults down through the centuries, however, were ever devoted exclusively to this Deity as the One Supreme God. Instead, he was perceived as having manifested himself in the forms or avatars of two other deities—namely, Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer. Alternatively, these could be understood, within schools of philosophy labelled after these deities, as the principle of preservation and the principle of destruction. Popular cults (and also philosophical systems), therefore, became divided during the first millennium of the common era, into Vaishnava and Shaiva branches. All three deities, taken together, would eventually be known as the *trimurti* or 'triple image' of God—a concept somewhat analogous to the theological concept of trinitarian monotheism. Each major deity had his own female consort. Shiva's consort, or an avatar thereof, was more often than not the deity worshipped within each locality and village. She was a *shakti* who, in one form or another linked to Lord Shiva, was perceived as being more active, more immediate, and hence more dangerous, if not also more to be feared and respected than her lordly consort. The name for Brahma's wife was Saraswati, goddess of wisdom. Vishnu had Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, as his consort; or, in the form of one of his ten avatars, such as Krishna or Ram, his consort would be Radha or Sita.

Generally, however, the popular *bhakti* cults became devoted to some one or more of the avatars of Vishnu or Shiva, or of one of their consorts. Around each of these two deities, over the course of many centuries, narrative versions of several mythological personalities and/or avatars ('in-carnations') gradually developed. Vishnu would be extolled and worshipped in the form of one or another of ten incarnations (avatars). Among the best known and most revered was Rama (the seventh) and Krishna (the eighth)—each of which was believed to have once actually played a historic part, either as a ruling monarch or as trickster in relation to some people within the Indo-Gangetic plain. The Krishna cults would grow until they became some of the most popular emotionalistic and devotionalistic (*bhakti*) movements in different regions of the continent. Taking devotional inspir-ation from the *Bhagavad Purana* and from its Bengal sage, Chaitanya (*c.* AD 1480), this stressed the importance of divine love as symbolized in the love of Krishna for the beautiful Radha. (By the late nineteenth century, a modern Vedantist movement, the Ramakrishna Mission, would also

come out of the same Vaishnava tradition, albeit in a more philosophical approach to ultimate fulfilment.)

Perhaps the largest of all cultic movements, from the early Middle Ages onward, were those (or, more accurately, those groups of) Shaiva cults that gave devotion to the *Mahadevi*. As Kali, she became the Great Mother image of All Being. As such, she was the Black Being of India. As the *shakti* of Shiva, she became known by countless names and numberless forms and incarnations (avatars). In every village there would be a special, local goddess who some would say was, in reality, a local and earthly manifestation of Kali. As *shakti*, she was forever to Shiva what electricity was to an electrical conduit or what lightning would be to the thunder cloud from whence it originated. Hers was the dynamic power. While Shiva, like the everlasting Himalayas, was forever dynamically dormant, or in thoughtful repose with his third eye closed, she was the active agent—ever potent, ever powerful, and ever dangerous. Just as a fearful child would rather approach mother who, however powerful, would at least be more immediately at hand and not so remote as the preoccupied father, so the Great Goddess in local form was the village goddess who could be propitiated here and now.

If anyone was to be appeased or approached in order to avert calamity, it was she. As an attractive girl, her name could be Chandi; as a submissive wife to Shiva, she was always Parvati; as an eight-armed harbinger of black destruction, she would be the dreaded Kali; and as an old hag or witch, she had sometimes also been called Durga—although sometimes these caricatures might be mixed up. (Of all the great festivals that developed in Bengal at the end of the nineteenth century, it was Durga Puja that would become probably the largest. At this festival, all the daughters in Bengal would return to the households of their parents for a time of happy reunion.) Within the many great temples of South India, images or statues erected in honour of Murugan and his *shakti* celebrated the revival of Shaivism as a royal cult, to the detriment of Buddhists and Jains, many of whom suffered persecution and death. And among them all, perhaps the Minakshi-Sundareshwarar Temple of Madurai, growing gradually over the course of a millennium or more, became one of the largest and best-known palace-temples to a Shaiva deity. The Dark Age in which Kali reigned for centuries was the Kali Yuga, the Age of Kali, the Black Goddess.

What would become particularly perplexing to Western travellers who came to the country over the course of many centuries was the way in which almost everything they encountered, Christian and non-Christian alike, seemed to have some 'religious' or 'spiritual' (*dharmic*) meaning attached to it. One could become confused by all the millions of gods and goddesses—the Vedic gods of nature, the animal gods, and the almost

too human gods. Even the living and recently living figures would be viewed as sages or saints, to be venerated as gods, as avatars or forms of either Vishnu or Shiva. What each such visitor had to bear in mind was the fact that no clear or neat line was ever drawn between what was divine and what was not. Indeed, all life was divine. God was to be seen within all living things, even flowers, birds, and fish. That more of deity might seem to have been seen in some forms of life did not alter this notion.

Shaiva and Vaishnava identifications also became attached to specific systems of philosophy (*sāmkyas*), as well as to various parallel systems of doctrine and ritual (*sampradāyas*). It is in this connection that, not long after the arrival of Christianity and just about the time that Islam was reaching India's shores, the great schools of philosophy reached their high points of intellectual appeal and sophistication and strength among Brahman communities in various parts of India, but especially in the south. The great champion of *advaita* philosophy—non-dualism or monism—was Shankara (or Shankaracharya).[5] His views became identified, from the beginning, with the Shaiva sects that were restoring Brahmanical authority throughout many kingdoms of South India at the same time that Thomas Christians were being joined, as we have seen, by Christian refugees from east Syria and Persia. Shankara was followed two centuries later by Rāmānuja (b. AD 1017, perhaps in Sri Parambattur, not far from Madras). He became the founder and defender of 'qualified non-dualism' or *visishta-advaita* philosophy. After teaching in Kanchipuram (Kanjivaram) and travelling throughout the continent twice, he finally settled in Srirangam, where he died and is buried in the great Sriranganath temple. Two schools of Sri–Vaishnava thought, the northern (*Vadagalai*) and the southern (*Tengalai*), claim to represent his teachings. These teachings greatly influenced various later *bhakti-yoga* cults.[6] Finally, still later would rise the philosophical system of outright and strict dualism called *dvaita*. This was developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by followers of Madhva-acharya and various Maharashtrian (Desastha and Konkanesthas or Chitpavans) Brahmans of western India. Resemblances between doctrines in Christian theology and ideas of Rāmānuja and Madhva have been noted by such scholars as A. L. Basham and John B. Carman. Thus, for example, 'Rāmānuja's God was a personal being, full of grace and love for his creation. He could even override the power of *karma* to draw repentant sinners to him.'[7] All of these various

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[5] Shankaracharya's (*c.* AD 788–820) successors rule four monastic colleges (*mathas*) for disciples (*shishiyas*), at Sringeri in the south, Dvaraka in the west, Badri in the north, and Puri in the east, which defend his philosophy and *sampradāya*.

[6] John B. Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

[7] A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that Was India: A Survey of the Culture of the Indian Sub-Continent before the Coming of the Muslims* (London: Sedgwick and Jackson, 1954), 332–3.

forms of indigenous culture and religious expression were already highly developed by the time Europeans came to India and began to encounter India's Christians.

Al Hind *and* Dar–ul-Islam

Al Hind was 'the Indo-Islamic world (of the Indian Ocean), from the Makran and Sind to the island archipelago and mainland peoples of Southeast Asia'.[8] Just as surely as a curved sword slices through a melon, so did the coming of Islam tend to further divide and subdivide the cultures and peoples of India. In this there was a remarkable irony. The mission of the Muslims, after all, was to make all men brothers and to unite all of mankind. Yet, at the same time, any person who refused to bow before the awesome majesty of the one and only true God or who bowed before any graven substitutes for God, in whatever form—whether in human, animal, or mineral form—could not be a true brother. Among the Faithful, any such misguided soul was, by definition, an infidel—and hence in a state of rebellion both against Allah and against *dar-ul-Islam*. Any non-believer (*kāfir*), in short, was to be seen as damned if not doomed. Such a person could have no proper place within good and godly society and certainly could not participate in just or legitimate government. Unbelievers were to be considered as beyond the pale and beyond the full protection of the state.

A true believer in Islam was obliged by a sense of mission to spread the just and godly new order over the whole world. Each such person was to understand that he should join others in a just and 'holy struggle' or 'holy war' (*jihad*), not only to bring both his own inner being into submission but also to bring all of mankind into the *dar-ul-Islam* or the 'Abode of Submission' (or 'Abode of Peace') to the Almighty. Parts of one's inner self or parts of the world not already enjoying this paradise on earth were considered as still residing within the *dar-ul-Harb* or the 'Abode of War' with God. While it was not mandatory for a person living within the new world order to be a believer, only devout and righteous Muslims were meant to rule. Persons who did not believe and who failed to give full support to the new order could certainly have no voice in its government or in its public life. Instead, they should be obliged, and even forced, to pay extra taxes (*jizya*) for the privilege of dwelling within *dar-ul-Islam*—or to suffer special penalties for blindness and stubbornness in refusing full submission. After all, any and all who were so privileged and who yet refused to make full submission could only be considered persons who were an extra burden upon those whose task it was to maintain and extend the well-ordered and godly society to the

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[8] See André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 4–6.

rest of the world. Ideally, all humankind were supposed to become partakers in this new order; and, in due time, they were surely destined to do so. Only then, after Islam had become firmly and permanently established over all of the earth, would one be able to say that true and total justice and peace on earth had become established.

The expansion of Islam into India was no sudden or simple event. For the first time since before the birth of Christ, when Greek (*Yavana*) civilization had entered India, if not for the first time in all of India's history, high Brahmanical or *Sanskriti* civilization met its match. A whole new kind of civilization, a totally different way of looking at human life, and a culture that was fully as strong and as sophisticated as that which already existed, came from the west. This civilization, unlike that of the Greeks, was not as eager to acquire new ideas about life, nor was it as ready either to absorb Hindu ways or to improve upon 'Hindu' culture. In essentials, Muslim ways did not easily mix with Hindu ways—any more than water could mix with oil. At the same time, we can see that the coming of Islam into India was a complex process and that it took many centuries to come to fruition. Islam was carried into the Indian continent, progressively and cumulatively, by three sets of peoples, representing three languages and cultures—namely, the Arabs, the Persians, and the Turks. One cannot understand the Islamic impact or legacy without taking all three of these cultures into consideration. But already preceding the presence of Islam in India, by many centuries, was the presence of Jewish and Christian communities. (This is the theme of our next chapter.)

Arabian Legacy

Islam began in or came from the desert—and also from the sea. Its clarion call to action brought together nomadic tribes some of whom were also seafaring merchant peoples. Its sacred book, the Quran, containing recitations of words to its Prophet, Muhammad, from the Almighty, became its absolute guide. Its mosques (*masjids*), gathering places where all local believers were to meet together on Fridays for common prayers and preaching, became well-springs of its inspiration. Its silver-tongued language of Arabic, embodying fiery oratory and eloquent poetry, fanned the flames of its vibrant and essentially militant faith (*dīn*). Its swords and its swarming squadrons of horsemen, as well as its fleets of ships, swept eastward and westward like a great prairie fire and like a great tsunami, carrying all before them—taking cities and towns along many of the shorelines and steppes of the old world. In two generations its green and gold banners, emblazoned with crescent and star, had been planted atop citadels from the Atlantic shores of Morocco to the steppe fringes of

Mongolia. By as early as AD 711 and 714 Arab swords had carried Islam across the world and into the kingdoms of Spain and Sindh.

It was the Arabs, led by their Prophet and his successors, who gave Islam its robust and simple monotheistic faith. They also gave a rich tongue for expressing this faith. In majestic tones the cry would ring out from every minaret, 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Messenger!'[9] With this cry, the Faithful would bow down with face touching the ground, before the awesome presence of this single, supreme, and personal God (*Allah*).[10] This was a Being who was felt to be so far and high above his created universe and so mighty in power that it was unthinkable, even abominable, to acknowledge, much less revere, anyone or anything else (*shirk*).[11] Also, at the same time, all believers were to see each other as brothers in the eyes of God. Each, from the perspective of heaven, was intrinsically the equal of the other, regardless of colour, class, or ethnicity. One had only to declare one's personal faith in the Unity of God (*Shahā-dah*), pray five times each day (offering *salāt*, or *namāz*), give alms (*zakāt*) to less privileged brothers, fast (*sawm*, or *roza*), especially during the month of Ramadan, and make one pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca in one's lifetime (if possible). If a person fulfilled these five duties, he would be considered to be a devout Muslim. If, for the sake of piety, one were also to abstain from strong drink and from keeping more than four wives, one could be seen as a better Muslim and could gain respect from fellow Muslims.

Beyond these simple deeds, however, each believer was free to pursue his own fortune, while there was a sense of common community (*ummah*) and even of common consensus (*ijmā*) among members of the faith, something that would be cemented on Fridays when one met others at the mosque (*masjid*) to pray and listen to preaching. There was nothing quite like a local congregation to compare with the structures of the Church. No great overarching earthly institution, nothing like a Catholic Church with an ecclesiological hierarchy for preserving discipline and with layers of formally ordained intermediary clergy and through whom one could gain assurance of God's blessing, was considered to be necessary. This simple, almost structureless community of faith is what prevailed for Muslims who were Sunni. For them there were no rules of apostolic or of imperial succession

[9] The *Kalimah*, word or title given to the Confession (*Shahādah*): '*La illahā illā Allāh, Wah Muhammad Rasul Allāh!*' See Kenneth Craig, *The House of Islam* (Encino, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing Co., Inc., 1975).

[10] The word *al-ilah* or 'the god'—like the English word—is older. Arab Christians and Jews used 'Allah' long before Muhammad's birth.

[11] This was the one, altogether unforgivable sin. Even to worship Jesus, as the Son of God, was to be guilty of *shirk*.

by which to preserve a tight-knit cohesion, nor any formal and legitimizing line of continuity for duly constituted authority. Rather, perhaps more like later, non-Catholic Christians, such as Congregationals, Dissenters, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, or other forms of Protestantism, a devout and good Muslim needed to feel no obligations other than what was based upon his own consent, and upon his private piety and compassion. He had only to trust to the beneficent mercy and providence of his Everlasting Almighty God and to trust to his own wits and skills for success—whether in this life or in the next. His own sword, his own resources and strengths, whether of pen or wit, could be sufficient, along with the blessing of God, to bring him personal fortune and fame. His own personal reputation and prestige among his fellow Muslims was important; but it was up to him to see to it that his fame (*izzat*) kept growing. Little did it matter how poor or lowly one might have been in the beginning. No lasting stigma attached to having once been a slave, thief, or beggar. What mattered most was how one got on in this life and how successful one was in fulfilling dreams and ambitions. Success was a sign of God's favour, whether it came from skill or luck.

Arabs were men of both desert and sea. As such, just as their caravans moved across vast empty spaces from oasis to oasis, so their convoys of ships sailed from seaport to seaport. Every year, since long before the birth of Muhammad, winds of the monsoon had carried them along the shores of Africa, the Red Sea, and Persian Gulf and along the coasts of India and beyond, all the way to China. Ships filled with fine fabrics of cotton and silk, spices and drugs, glass, ivory, and jewels, and many more luxuries arrived at the ports of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. In return, gold and horses were ever in demand in India. Not unnaturally, wherever Arab ships sailed and wherever Arab merchants and travellers settled and formed colonies, in virtually every busy port of the Indian Ocean, vigorous exchanges of goods and services generated enclaves of local prosperity.

Whether or not seagoing Arabs were different from Arab nomads of the desert is open to question. Whatever the case, not all Arabs held simple ideas of right and wrong and settled difficult questions with the edge of the sword. Alongside Muhammad and Arab communities living in Mecca and Medina, were seagoing Arab merchants who were literate, sophisticated in financial matters, and culturally advanced. Their style of life, as perceived among local communities along the coasts of India, seems to have been both interesting and beneficial. Local natives who lived near them and with whom they had business dealings would have found it more than worthwhile to have such neighbours. Rich and comfortably settled Arab merchants in ports along the coasts of India brought profit and prosperity to those with whom they had dealings.

The existence of small but rich, energetic, and influential colonies of Arab merchants in cities of the East, as with cities of the Middle East and North Africa, was a great help for the spread of Islam. The new faith was carried as super-cargo via ships and brought surges of conversion into every port where these ships touched. Many within the Arab communities of Asia quickly turned to the new faith. Their excitement over Islam was contagious. Some of the peoples around them, with whom they were on good terms, also became believers. The Islam brought by Arab merchants was, despite the simplicity of the faith, culturally sophisticated and cosmopolitan. Significantly, therefore, the earliest Muslims in India seem to have been relatively peaceful, and persuasive. Arab Muslim sailors and traders and scholars settled quietly in such seaports as Cambay, Chaul, and Korkai. Mosques spread along the Konkan and Malabar coasts, around Cape Comorin all the way along the Bay of Bengal up to the Sundarbans, and especially on both shorelines of the Gulf of Mannar opposite Sri Lanka. But the largest Muslim colonies settled in cities and towns on the Malabar coast. One ruler was converted. Muslim officials served Hindu kings who vied with each other for access to the Arabian horse trade. Groups of converts arose, forming Indian communities such as the Lubbai. It seems possible that ideas were exchanged not only between Hindu and Muslim neighbours, but also between Muslims, Jews, and Christians, insomuch that such contacts may have played a part in new *bhakti* movements that arose. In the year 711, upon learning how their wives and children had been mistreated, Arabs also conquered Sindh. That was also the very year in which Arabs entered Spain.

Persian Legacy

It was Persians who provided the fine, subtle cultural gauze through which the fiery tonic of Islam also filtered into India from the north. Only a decade after Muhammad's death (AD 632), the new faith swept across Persia. As a result, Islam soon held more non-Arabs than Arabs. Non-Arab Muslims, known as *Mawalis*,[12] eventually resented being treated as inferiors—in violation of Islamic ideals. Persians had good reasons to be proud of their ancient civilization. Also, Arabs soon found that they could not rule the former provinces of the Byzantine and Persian empires without substantial help from highly trained local officers who retained control of information, as well as administrative and bureaucratic machinery. *Mawali* discontents found expression in the movement that would eventually become known as the Shi'a (from *Shia't Ali*, or the 'party of Ali'). Resentments finally led to a successful revolt (in 744). Thereafter, while the caliphs were Arabs, the

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[12] Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1960), 70–2.

Islamic Empire itself became progressively less Arab and more Persian. The capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad, not far from Najaf and Karbala, towns that would become centres of Shi'a piety. Also, structures of government strongly resembled that of the old Persian Empire. More and more bureaucrats, soldiers, scholars, artists, and other sophisticated professionals were Persian. Four developments, in particular, coincided with the growth of Persian influence.

The first was professional specialization. Ordinary Muslims found it increasingly hard to find answers to all of life's problems in the Quran. The Caliph of Baghdad, too busy with military, legal, and political affairs or preoccupied with private pleasures, became increasingly remote and unapproachable, so that he was less and less able to listen to appeals from the common man. One solution was to transfer much if not most of his authority over religious, ritual, and spiritual matters to groups of experts. Henceforth, experts would make rational and reasonable pronouncements on matters of Islamic doctrine as this applied to practical problems of daily life. Gradually, two kinds of such groups came into being. The more formal of these were groups of legal authorities whose rational and scholarly powers enabled them to make declarative decisions that were known as *fatwahs*. Such authorities, known as *ulema* (plural form of *alim*), gradually built up an elaborate system of precedent law, based upon the Quran and the *Shari'a*, the body of Sacred Law derived therefrom. Groups of *ulema* gradually arrived at fixed judgements that delved into details of what Muslims should do, or not do, in each and every conceivable situation that they encountered. Soon every town had its own group of *ulema* who could pass judgement on questions of conduct and conscience. In due course, differences between groups of *ulema*, based on variations in philosophical or pietistic perspectives, led *ulema* to divide themselves into four schools of judicial interpretation: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, and Hanbali.

Henceforth, pious Muslims could feel that the purest and wisest of Muslim men were in charge of things that really mattered. Of course, by implication, this also meant that those who continued to run the government, guard the frontiers, keep the peace, collect taxes, or sip the sweet luxuries and pleasures of life in palaces and gardens of the powerful and the wealthy became less important than they had previously been. In effect, political life became more detached from public piety and more secular. By implication also, if *ulema* could serve as guides for making sure of a godly and goodly Muslim society, this kind of specialization also meant that leaders of other religious communities, who were known as *Dimmis*, would henceforth also be given authority to guide their own people and to govern them in matters of civil and communal life, free from hindrance by rulers of the Islamic state. Christians and Jews, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis

(Zoroastrians), together with various high-caste, twice-born Hindu communities, such as Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishiya castes, might also be allowed to govern their own internal affairs. But there could be no halfway measures. A person was either a Muslim or a *dimmi* (protected infidel). If Muslim, the shadow of the *ulema* would always be near to make sure that things of public concern were done properly, and righteously. So it was in the heyday of Islam, when the Islamic Empire was perhaps the most extensive and advanced political system on earth.

The second development within Islam was the great schism that split the entire Islamic community (*ummah*) into two parts. What was at issue was whether or not there should be a successor to the Prophet Muhammad and, if so, whether the successor should be selected from within the Prophet's own family—based upon the tribal principle of blood and heredity. Some Muslims held that believers could not obey God without the help of a worthy saint. They felt that only a true successor to the Prophet would be legitimate—and that his nephew Ali was the true successor. When the majority of Muslims disagreed, indicating that as the 'Seal of the Prophets' he could have no legitimate successor, the minority stubbornly refused to admit that their ideal was unrealistic. For adamantly refusing to think that the one true Prophet was enough, this minority became heretics in the eyes of most Muslims. When they then declared that only a descendant of Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, could lead the faithful, this party of Ali became known as Shi'a (*Shi'at Ali*)—or 'splitters'. After Ali was murdered in 661, and after his son (Hassan) and his retinue were massacred at Karbala in 681, pious disciples and followers of this party began to extol suffering and martyrdom as an special or ultimate virtue. Ali's line of 'Successors' or *Imāms* died out. This happened twice, after seven *Imāms* in the eighth century, when one party of Shi'as declared the line dead, and after twelve *Imāms* in the twelfth century, when a second party of Shi'as declared the line to be extinct. The two parties of Shi'as—known as the 'Seveners' and the 'Twelvers' respectively—continued to contend against each other over which held the greatest claim to legitimacy. The tendency of one sect of Shi'as to split away from another, each new group being somewhat more adamant than the one before and each being led by its own 'Successor' or *Imām*, would itself become a legacy of the Great Schism. Still, all Shi'as tended to hold the view that a hidden *Imām* would one day make a miraculous or messianic return. In that day God's wrath would be turned upon the wicked and an ultimate Peace on Earth (*dar-ul-Islam*) would be established.

In the meanwhile, Shi'as, whether Seveners or Twelvers, or whether Ismailis, also established much more structured hierarchies of clerics, each under the leadership of one supreme leader (*Imām*, or *ayatollah*) or another. All other Muslims, constituting that larger majority of more basic and simple

upholders of the faith, who held only to the fundamentals of the Truth (*Sunnah*) as shown in the Quran, the Traditions (*Hadīth*), and the Law (*Shari'a*), would become known as Sunnis. The Sunni–Shi'a Schism would continue to poison relationships within the larger community of Islam (*Ummah*), not only within the Islamic world at large, but also and especially within the continent of India. Not surprisingly, with their penchant for ordered and bureaucratic structures, most Persians, as well as most inhabitants of the adjacent lands of lower Mesopotamia, became Twelver Shi'as.

The third development within Islam that came as a result of Persian influence can be seen as a dramatic increase in all kinds of cultural sophistication, style, and syncretism.[13] Especially in the art of graceful and gracious living, and in style, Persians made their greatest contribution both to Islam and to India. Shi'a rulers, scholars, and saints succeeded in giving delicate shades to feeling and thought about divine love, as well as to the gentle and courtly ideals of what it was to be noble. Poetry and art became the supreme means for expressing and for blending spiritual and carnal sensibilities. Under such inspired poets as Rumi (d. 1273), Sa'di (d. 1291), and Hafiz (d. 1390), to name but three prominent figures, Persian began to replace Arabic as the poetic tongue for expressing earthly beauty. It became the literary and politic language for all educated and cultivated Muslim gentlemen who lived in India, especially those dwelling in the Indo-Gangetic plain and in the Deccan. Of course there could be no replacing of Arabic. Arabic had to reign supreme for matters that were sacred, if for no other reason than that the recitations from God to Muhammad contained in the Quran were in that tongue and because in that tongue alone were the faithful to pray. (In due course, as is shown below, Turkish and Urdu would provide the vocabulary for war and administration.) Yet, for setting fashion in fancy living, the old Persian ways of speaking, thinking, and writing were revived. Persian prose and poetry provided a rich brocade of narrative about epic deeds, royal sagas, noble chivalry, with anecdotes and fables on morality compounded with principles and ideals of imperial grandeur. In clothing, in foods, in polite manners, in fine music, in exquisite works of miniature painting, in laying out gardens and fountains with reflecting pools of cool water, in refined styles of building and architecture, as in incredibly ornate and precise jewellery and stone inlay work, Persian culture reflected all of the accumulated skills and traditions which had been handed down since the times of Cyrus and Darius and Xerxes.

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[13] Two forms taken over by Indians were: (1) miniature painting in which non-Muslim epic themes prevail; (2) Indo-Saracenic architectural design as epitomized in the Taj Mahal and in fortresses, gardens, palaces, or more humble dwellings.

Persia, after all, had been the earliest of all true empires (650–329 BC). Like a huge umbrella, the Persian Empire had spread its shade over many cultures, peoples, and races. Its single Divine King had ruled thirty-one satrapies, established inflexible laws, and run an autocratic machinery of bureaucratic state administration. Its roads had provided for fast and safe transport. Only in matters of pure and abstract sciences, such as in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, where further speculative and experimental logic was called for, did Persians fail to keep up with what had begun in ancient Greece and India. While they certainly could put together catalogues and compendiums of past knowledge, the development of new or critical ideas would increasingly begin to elude them and, as a consequence, sciences within the Muslim world began to wither even as they began to grow stronger in the monasteries and universities of the West. Still, when the Turks came into the plains of northern India, they came praying in Arabic, speaking in Persian, and looking like Persians. (For nearly a thousand years, even into modern times, most official records and chronicles in North India would be written in Persian, as would also continue to be the case in Afghanistan.)

The fourth development is known as *Sufism*. Emphasis upon deep spirituality, while latent all along, seems to have increased considerably after the terrible destruction of Baghdad, and of the Islamic Empire, by the Mongols (1258). For all the magnificence and splendour, the sham and pretence of unity within the Islamic Empire was irrevocably smashed by that event—so that, as the nursery rhyme goes, 'all the king's horses and all the king's men' would never put it together again. The brazen flaunting of brutality, chicanery, and impiety in the seats of the mighty had long caused anxiety and concern among the pious. The *ulema*, as an institution, could still serve as guides to personal piety throughout the Muslim world. But neither law nor piety could cope with the chaos and ruin left in the wake of the Mongol tsunami—where the dust of what had been cities and the pyramids of skulls (*kula-minar*) were stark reminders of human frailty. Nor would either logic or ritual alone any longer suffice. Instead, many a person found ways to cope with such enormities by simply following the path laid down by some spiritual role–model or saint (*pīr*). Deeply spiritual saints (*pīrs*) were called *sufis*. The question was whether or not *dar-ul-Islam* could and should not be described, first and foremost, if not primarily, as the reign and realm of God *within* the mind and heart; and whether, as a consequence, this should not first be accomplished within the spirit of each individual person before being extended to all within each society, before it was further expanded so as to take the form of a universal political dominion.

Sufi ideas and ideals, putting stress on individual as well as corporate experience of inner, spiritual or mystical submission to God, called for

exercises in rigorous self-discipline. Each member of a sufi order, called a *silsilah* (meaning 'chain'), was a spiritual disciple or devotee (*murid* or *darvesh*) of a *sufi shaikh* or leader. As such, he was expected to renounce and give up all earthly, personal, and worldly desires and to become rigorously trained in powers of endurance and self-denial, with the aim of thereby attaining deeper insights and loftier visions of the sublime. Within each sufi, mystic, monastic, even masochistic elements would be melded together by subjecting body and mind to pains and torments in order to attain an ultimate 'Vision of God'. Not all sufi orders, however, were the same. While most were gentle and pious and persuasive, trying to show tormented people how to approach a more loving God, thereby helping to make piety accessible to all, there were some orders that became extremely militant, combining inner and outer forms of *jihad*. Sufi soldiers, in one form or another, would give impetus to the second great wave of Islamic expansion across the world.

The success with which Islam continued to expand even after the collapse of its greatest empire, so that it spread beyond the steppes of High Asia, below the Sahara into East and West Africa, and southward into Central India, was, to a large degree, a result of sufi effort. Sufi saints and warriors, like Christian crusaders who were their contemporaries, gave new momentum and new driving force to the faith. Indeed, it was due to sufi impetus, partially in reaction to Christian crusades, that the still large numbers of Christians remaining in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, and the Maghreb, whose populations until then had been in the majority, were converted. Also, at the same time, sufis took Islam back into the countryside—back to the more robust and simple faith of the desert. Henceforth, whether in city or in country, whether simple or sophisticated, whether sublime or rustic, wider varieties of religious experience and expression were to become possible—so that any man could share in the benefits of Islam. Within India, as a consequence, there was also a blending of *sufi* and *bhakti* mysticism. The interaction between *bhakti* and *sufi* ideas produced a syncretistic mix that resulted, perhaps as found almost nowhere else, in ways by which Muslims and non-Muslims could find harmony.

Sufism, in short, resulted in a proliferation of distinctions between different kinds of religious experience, each calling for a distinct kind of expertise and leadership: between *ulema* and *sufi shaikhs* (or *pirs*), between the Quran, the Sunnat and the Hadith ('Traditions'); and between *shariyat* ('path of law') and *tariqat* ('path of devotion'). Similarly, among large segments of Sunni faithful, different kinds of legitimate and illegitimate sufi orders arose. Distinctions were made between legitimate Sunni *Ba-Shar Silsilahs* ('Proper Chain-Links' or 'True Succession of Tradition') and *silsilahs* (sufi orders) that were considered *Be-Shar*—meaning 'wayward' or

'wild', improper and illegimate. Among orders that were led by genuine and saintly spiritual guides (sufi shaikhs, *pirs*, or *murshids*) were the Chishtiyah (1195), whether of the Nizami or Sabri branches; the Suhrawardiyah (1250); the Shattariyah (1406); the Quadiriyah (1482–1517); and the extremely militant Naqshbandiyah (1603).[14] Tokens of blessing handed from one sufi shaikh to the next sufi shaikh were called *tabarrakāt*. These, usually consisting of such personal items as the sufi master's cloak, shawl, staff, turban, sandals, or books of the master, would serve to legitimize a chain of succession.[15] Among spiritual lineages that would be considered to be among the more 'wayward' (*be-shar*) were such movements in India as those of the Amadiyah and Bahai. Such groups frequently suffered from outbreaks of persecution and violence.

Turkish and/or Urdu Legacy

The expansion of Islam by means of conversion was not the norm. After the initial expansion of Islam under Arab leadership, internal changes in the style and society of Islam brought about by Persians were magnified and multiplied by the Turks. Turks provided a new cutting edge for further Islamic expansion. It was the Turks, indeed, who brought Islam into India with great force. They brought it on horseback, from the north-west. To understand how their cumulative contribution came to be so powerful, one must look back into the environments of Central Asia from whence they came.

   Turkish peoples, tracing themselves back into antiquity, were nomadic herdsmen from the cruel and hazardous open spaces of the vast, grass-covered steppes. Struggles for survival in wild and unfriendly circumstances, over centuries untold, produced those hardy peoples of the tundra who had first domesticated the horse and who, in the process, had developed techniques of horsemanship that moved from the use of bare hands and feet, to bridles, and then to saddles and stirrups. Turks of the steppes produced squadrons of mounted archers. These had forever been testing and perfecting their skills in relation to peoples and institutions similar to their own that were evolving around them. In the face of stark dangers, they perfected swift, brutal, and efficient forms of political and military organization. In effect, these nomadic peoples perfected migratory and ever moving political

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[14] *Naqshbandiyah*, still very active throughout Central and South Asia, were among the most ferocious and militant of sufi soldiers who served in armies that expanded the frontiers of Islam in the Deccan and Bengal.

[15] Simon Digby, '*Tabarrakāt* and Succession among the Great Chishtī Shaykhs of the Delhi Sultanate', in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 63–103.

systems. These 'hordes' (*ordu*), or nomadic encampments, were also finely honed war machines that could quickly mobilize squadrons of horsemen to meet any perceived threat. Under capable leadership these tribal systems could be united and turned against the entire 'civilized' or settled world, reaching almost simultaneously into Europe and Egypt and India and China. Sythians had done this. So had the Huns. The Turks who burst out of Central Asia seem, in many ways, to have been cultural descendants of these earlier nomadic peoples. At the very beginning of the eleventh century, they broke into India, even as some of their cousins, as slaves within the Islamic Empire, conquered Jerusalem and, thereby, provoked the Crusades.

What made Turks even more formidable was their conversion to Islam, first when some of them served as soldier–slaves within the Islamic Empire and then when whole tribes in Central Asia, after considering and weighing the comparative benefits of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, opted for Islam. Thereafter, in the name of religion, by which they justified efforts to extend *dar-ul-Islam* into lands of infidel peoples, they brought terror and sword and destruction to the plains of Hindustan. By declaring the plains beyond the Indus as fair game for *jihads* against wicked infidels and idolaters, they fought for honour and power and booty in this world, and for paradise in the next. It was both easy and convenient for many of them to hold clear and strong convictions, drawing stark lines between what was black and what was white. Simple views strongly held made them all the more implacable as foes, and all the more ruthless as rulers. Their great military campaigns and victories were marked with *kula minar* or 'towers of skulls'— symbols that were meant to strike terror into the hearts of the vanquished.

Massive campaigns, after a few initial raids by predecessors, began with Mahmud of Ghazni in the year 1000. Sounds of temple destroying, treasure looting, and idolater slaying echoed across the land. Ancient, rigid, and decayed kingdoms crumbled and vanished. Enormous hoards of booty were carried out of India on the backs of captured elephants, camels, cattle, and slaves. Among these slaves were hundreds of thousands of skilled artisans, who would help to build some of the most beautiful of Islamic mosques and palaces. In the din of idol breaking, Turkish Muslim predators gained a reputation for religious bigotry which no amount of subsequent tolerance would fully erase. In the decades that followed, as raids penetrated ever more deeply into and across the countryside, governors and garrisons were left behind to facilitate further expeditions and to collect taxes. Muslim control moved steadily eastwards, down the great plain of Hindustan and into side valleys, until it reached the Bay of Bengal. Next, it broke out of the valleys and plains into the upland jungles, moving up into Kashmir and down onto the Deccan plateau. This process took 300 years. Not until 1565, when the great imperial city of Vijayanagara fell before the onslaught of a

coalition of Deccan sultanates, did the southern part of the peninsula feel the weight of Islamic expansion. But, by then, even the sultanates were making use of non-Muslim warriors, generals, and officials. By that time also, peoples in the south of India had also gained from experience with non-Turkish Muslims, where an Arab and Persian Muslim presence along the coasts was already centuries old. Finally, by that time, Portuguese military officers and equipment were being deployed in efforts to halt the southward advances of Turkish Muslim power.

Turks established Islamic rule in India. While the whole continent was never completely subdued, and never came under the sway of a grand single empire, for about 800 years Hindustan, from the mouth of the Indus to the mouth of the Ganga, was ruled by Muslim overlords. Building upon the foundations of their ancient nomadic culture, with military and organizational disciplines upon which they had so often depended for survival on the steppes, Indo-Turkish regimes erected essentially parasitic systems of government that were quite similar in rationale. Their genius for organizing a pastoral political economy enabled them to set up domains modelled after their nomadic military encampments, or hordes. The hot lands of Hindustan became their steppes; and the various peoples and resources residing in agricultural villages became their flocks and herds. In this manner, using skills honed for survival on the cruel steppes, they were no less brutal, efficient, and ruthless in dealing with those who dared to oppose them. (If life was cheap or recklessly squandered on the steppes, so too Turkish rulers were now no more scrupulous about blood or tears in Hindustan.)

Several factors favoured Turkish control. First, while they themselves were never numerous when compared with the millions of inhabitants in the continent, societies in India were already so fragmented by increasing numbers of castes, and so increasingly bound by caste rules and taboos of exclusion and pollution, that little basis for unified resistance remained. At the same time, due to caste oppression, there was only a minimal amount of loyalty toward the older ruling and warrior classes of North India. Turkish rulers and warriors had only to destroy small classes of rulers and warriors whom they first encountered in order to win some measure of support from lower classes and in order, thereby, to become the new rulers of Hindustan. Second, whether by force or by persuasion, it was not difficult to convert substantial numbers of people to Islam, especially from those outcaste groups who could see no other way to escape from perpetual servility and thraldom. Such groups were attracted to levelling ideas and impulses of Islamic doctrine, together with opportunities that conversion offered. At the same time, there were some people within the clerical and learned castes, such as Kayasthas and Brahmans, who could see no harm in serving the new rulers and who stood to profit handsomely by such collaboration.

This was also true for some warrior groups within those villages that had felt oppressed and where, in consequence, there was no sense of loss at the destruction of former masters. Turkish rule, in short, made it possible for many persons to join and to enter into a closer relationship with a non-caste-ridden, internationally flexible, and mobile community of Muslim rulers. Finally, and importantly, as news of the establishment of Muslim rule in India spread to the furthest corners of the Islamic world, it attracted a continual stream of gifted and able adventurers from other parts of that world. This led to an immigration of cultural elites from other countries and had a revitalizing effect that, in turn, slowed the processes of decay within Muslim dynasties. Indo-Turkish Muslims in Persian garb and style became the highest ruling and warrior class at the top of highly fragmented and segmented local societies. Except for Rajput chiefs in their desert strongholds, no other important indigenous group would be capable of displacing these Muslim rulers until the rise of the Marathas in the seventeenth century. A few details in the development of these Indo-Turkish regimes can be sketched briefly.

The first permanent Muslim dominion was the Delhi Sultanate. This was not set up until the beginning of the thirteenth century. In 1206, a former Ghorid Mamluk, or slave-general from Ghor, established himself as Sultan of Delhi and began to give increasing political unity to northern India. By 1388, the sway of his successors, and of successive dynasties, covered much of Hindustan and, despite formidable strength, also suffered moments of faltering weakness that usually arose during times of contested succession. Delhi sultans, moreover, also pushed their armies ever more deeply southward into the Deccan. Under Muhammad bin Tughluq, Muslim power actually reached as far as Madurai, if only briefly. After 1336–50, independent Muslim sultans in the Deccan threw off the authority of Delhi. Virtually all of the Dravidian south then came under control of the Telugu-Kannada-speaking war-state centred in Vijayanagara.

Much of India was fortunate in having had a strong Turkish power established in Delhi by 1206. Soon after that, the vast military resources of Central Asia were welded together under the genius of Genghis Khan (1206–27) and the Mongols. The havoc wrought by Mongol hordes across much of the civilized world also came up to the banks of the Indus and continued to cross into the Punjab. This happened almost every year for nearly a century. But, due to the strength of the Delhi Sultanate, the continent was spared what happened to Persia, Mesopotamia, Eastern Europe, and China. Years of living in comfort softened the Turkish regime in India, so that military discipline sometimes became lax and predatory adventurers were able to benefit from times of political disintegration. Fragile alliances of the more precariously situated rulers broke down; family

and clan rivalries developed; and rulers turned on each other in struggles for mastery over the spoils of the land. Worst of all, flimsy rules for succession and intrigues among many wives within royal zenanas (or harems) over whose son would succeed his father undermined political stability. After 1388, the process of political deterioration grew particularly bad, so that it was difficult to know who was really supposed to be in charge of the government. Ten years later, another enormous political-military tsunami swept into the Punjab from Central Asia. This time Hindustan did not escape. Having already conquered much of Asia, hordes led by the Iron Limper—Timur the Lame (aka Timurlenk, or Tamerlane)—crushed all who stood in their path and broke into Delhi. Over 100,000 were wantonly slain and the countryside did not recover from the shock for more than a century. Famine and plague followed in his wake. After this terrible disaster, political disintegration followed. Thereafter, princes in Gujarat, Kashmir, Bengal, and the Deccan defied the rather ineffectual authority of the Afghan Lodhi sultans whose writ often ran not much further than the gates of Delhi.

By 1500, only two years after Vasco da Gama's ships reached Calicut, another small but well-organized force also stood at the gates of India. Even as fleets of Portugal along the shorelines of Malabar were beginning to increase in number and strength, a young prince of the Persian Renaissance who had been driven out of his patrimony of Samarkand by even fiercer hordes to the north cast his eyes upon what he saw as a weakening within the Delhi Sultanate. A direct descendant of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, he had established himself as ruler of Kabul (in Afghanistan) and had made a number of successful raids down onto the plains of the Punjab beyond the Khyber Pass. With the doors to the west and north firmly closed against him by fiercer and stronger enemies, he waited for a chance to play a higher-stakes game in a bid for imperial power in Delhi. At an opportune moment, while princes on the plains were squabbling, Babur set out on his fateful mission. In the spring of 1526, his small army of 12,000 horsemen and artillery (brought all the way from Istanbul) met a host of about 100,000 near the village of Panipat and won a resounding victory. Ibrahim Lodi, the Sultan of Delhi, was slain. Indo-Afghan and Indo-Turkish forces were too much at odds with each other to rally against Babur. Babur was able to march into Delhi and on to Agra with hardly a blow. The Mughal Empire in India had begun.

Of course this empire did not come instantly into being. Many a desperate battle had yet to be won and not a few reverses suffered. In fact, the very next year Babur faced an equally severe test when his small army met the huge Rajput army which had marched out of their desert strongholds to meet his force at Kanua. After his death in 1530, his son Humayun also had troubles when Afghans rallied around Sher Shah. This prince was able to

drive Humayun out of India. But when Sher Shah himself died after only a few years, Humayun was able to return in 1555 and reconquer Delhi and Agra. But he too had an accident, apparently slipping and cracking his head on a stone floor.

Humayun's younger son, Akbar, soon became the greatest of all the Mughals. Only a boy of 13 when he struggled to win the throne, his hold on power was initially precarious. Yet, by the time he died in 1605, his empire had become one of the greatest in history, perhaps the strongest India had ever known, and certainly more vast than anything in nearly 2,000 years. By freeing himself from overbearing ministers and from harem intrigues at an early age, he soon exhibited a phenomenal capacity for leadership. This called for sleepless energy and insight.

The main pillars (or policies) by which Akbar erected this grand imperial edifice are quite clear. First, and not unusually, he embarked upon a programme of rapid expansion, through conquest and alliance. While doing this, he continually searched out the very best possible leaders and kept them so busy that they had little opportunity for intrigue. He then gave them positions of trust and rewards worthy of their mettle. Second, he set up a network of personal allegiance to himself, through royal alliances. Through marriages to daughters of the important princes, whether Muslim or Hindu, he took pains to convince each important community that he himself was their personal Lord and Protector, even going so far as entering personally into family rituals and indigenous religious observances. Third, in his employing of imperial officers, he tried to make sure not to discriminate in favour of any one group and carefully maintained an even balance in relations with every important group, so that each was a check on the other. In so doing, he attracted and engaged various kinds of Brahmans, Rajputs, and Kayasthas as administrators and soldiers, as well as Afghan, Uzbek, Irani, and Turani notables.

The fourth pillar of Akbar's imperial system was to become the most controversial and dangerous. He exercised remarkable religious toleration, and promoted this in many of his dealings. Henceforth, non-Muslims (*Dimmis*) could worship freely without having to pay the *jizyah* tax normally paid by non-Muslims. He patronized Sanskrit learning. He allowed each of his non-Muslim wives or concubines to worship in her own religious tradition within her own palace. He abolished the pilgrim tax levied on people who visited their sacred sites throughout his domains. He even adopted some local customs, such as *darshan*—distributing his own weight in gold to men of learning and piety—and celebrated non-Muslim festivals, such as *Deepavali* (or *Diwali*), the 'Festival of Lights'. In deference to local prejudices and sensibilities, he went so far as to limit cow slaughter and meat eating, at least in public places. He sponsored the translation of many local

writings into Persian. Within the Hall of Worship at his pink city of Fathepur Sikri, he supported eclectic religious enquiries, sitting for hours on his regal pillow (*masnād*) and listening to debates and discussions between orthodox *ulema*, mystical *sufi shaikhs*, *pirs*, Brahman *pandits*, wandering *sadhus* and *yogis*, as well as various Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jesuit missionaries. So learned did he become in such matters that, in 1579, the imperial *ulema* declared that he himself should be the final arbiter and court of appeal in religious disputes. In order to establish an overarching institution that could give legitimacy to his position at the centre of the empire and to bring all its peoples under one great umbrella of imperial authority, he even founded an eclectic religious order called the 'Divine Faith' (*Din Illahi*). But this plan backfired and alienated devout Muslims more than it cemented the peoples of his realm.

Finally, Akbar established an exceedingly strong administrative system by which he could govern his empire and carry out his desires. Building upon foundations that had survived in India from ancient times, he perfected an elaborate organization and employed many thousands of civil and military officers. The entire hierarchy of bureaucrats and soldiers was held together by an elite cadre of special officers. Within this elite of *mansabdars* or 'rank holders', each person held a rank (*zat*) according to an assigned number of horsemen (*sawar*). He would be ceremonially invested from head to foot (*sar-o-pa*) with special garments consisting of turban, tunic, and slippers, together with lavish gifts according to his rank and station. He would then be assigned to definite military, revenue, and governing responsibilities in provinces both remote and near at hand. At the centre of all power and pageantry, within the colourful and elaborate ceremonies of either the court or the camp, was the imperial household organization (*khalsa*) itself. And at the centre of this was the Imperial Presence (*Huzur*) of the Padshah Himself and his Exalted Throne (*Masnad Mu'allah*). The whole system worked well only so long as there was an exceptionally strong, shrewd, and sleepless individual at its helm. Few dynastic families could produce and sustain leaders with such qualities for many generations. Akbar was succeeded by three more, remarkably gifted, 'Grand' Mughals.

These three emperors ruled for more than a century. They were almost as strong and exceptional in talents as Akbar and his grandfather Babur. But each in his own way did something to disturb and undermine the foundations on which the empire rested. Jahangir (1605–27) married the Irani princess, Nur Jahan; and before long the delicate balance of imperial impartiality between elite groups was upset. Irani poets, scholars, and officers flocked to the court for special favours. The brilliance of court life drained the treasury. While Jahangir liked Hindu festivals, he also promoted conversions to Islam, persecuted Jains, and, in 1606, executed Guru Arjan, one of the ten saint-*gurus* who founded

Sikhism. Numbers of useless, time-serving officers mushroomed. So did corruption. His successor, Shah Jahan (1628–58), sent Mughal armies to conquer the Deccan and north-west beyond the Khyber Pass. Since his soldiers liked to take their families, servants, animals, and belongings along on campaigns, Mughal armies dragged along huge, unwieldy and excessively expensive 'exalted encampments' (*urdu-mu'allahs*). Like devouring locusts, such encampments became hated and feared. Also, since these armies were slowly becoming backward in military science and technology, foreign officers and artillery had to be brought from afar and employed at considerable expense. Nevertheless, Shah Jahan tried to strengthen the imperial govern- ment. He restored the old balance between nobles such as Iranis and Turanis. He honoured old alliances with Rajput princes. He employed Kayasthas, Rajputs, and Brahmans as generals and ministers; and he managed finances so carefully that his treasury filled up. In only two matters did he cause trouble for Hindu and non-Muslim *Dimmis* among his subject peoples: no longer would they be allowed to build temples and no longer would they be allowed to do anything that might lead to the conversion of Muslims to another faith.

The last great emperor was Aurangzeb, also known by his title of Shah Alam. Like his father and grandfather, he came to the throne in a pool of blood, by killing his brothers. Shah Jahan favoured Aurangzeb's elder brother, Dara Shikuh. For this Shah Jahan was imprisoned in Akbar's great Red Fortress of Agra where, for his remaining years, he could gaze at the fabulous Taj Mahal that he had erected in memory of his beloved Mumtaz Mahal. Aurangzeb tried to strengthen and extend his empire. Some religious communities, such as various Shi'as and Sikhs, were perse- cuted. As top Hindu ministers died off, they were not replaced with Hindus but, whenever possible, with Muslims. Rajput warriors were antagonized. Costly military campaigns were launched into the south. After years of trying to bring all of India under imperial control, the treasury became exhausted. Fewer beautiful buildings were erected. The *jizyah* and other taxes were reimposed on non-Muslims. Temples were destroyed. A Censor of Morals banned music at the court, abolished many ceremonies, embarked on heresy hunts, and made life difficult for non-Muslim elites. Aurangzeb hated corruption, low morals, and love of luxury. But he was not able to put a halt to much that he abhorred. When officers in low positions subverted his orders, he ordered lower-level officers to be fired and replaced. There were not enough able replacements, however; and he had to withdraw his order. While able, gifted, and powerful, with fiery convictions, Aurangzeb also seems to have been rigorous in his own personal religious life. After a ceaseless campaign for a quarter of a century without returning to Delhi, he

was an old man when he was found dead on his knees at prayer within his tent. How many would mourn his passing can only be imagined.

It was during the reign of Shah Alam, the Emperor Aurangzeb, that Marathas grew strong and became a menace to the imperial system—and also to much settled life. His final years were spent in war against these rugged warriors from the western hills and jungles. Under their great hero, Shivaji, Maratha horsemen began to fan out across India in small bands and then in bigger armies. Using guerrilla tactics, they ultimately became the scourge to all, Hindu and Muslim alike. They struck supply lines, caravan trains, small outposts, and cities, vanishing before reinforcements could arrive. Unfortunately, Marathas did little to construct a new imperial stability or to restore peace. They helped to make India so unsafe that, in due course, when relatively small *Pfarangi* (European) forces who had arrived on India's shores and settled themselves in coastal enclaves began to expand, some local elites in Bengal and South India not only welcomed them, but also collaborated with them. (What happened next is the theme of Chapter 7.)

4

THOMAS CHRISTIANS
AND THE THOMAS TRADITION

Questions about the antiquity of India's Thomas Christians, along with questions about the historicity of their origins, are not easy to answer. Indeed, it is impossible to establish this antiquity with any more scientific validity than many events of ancient history that are accepted without much question. To identify, trace, or validate the baffling array of source materials relating to Christian origins in India is a complex task. Answers come out of the north and the south, as well as the east and the west. While 'southern' or 'eastern' (indigenous or Indian-language) sources of the Thomas tradition stress maritime arrival in the continent of India, the 'northern' or 'western' (external Persian or Syriac) sources of this tradition also suggest 'overland' origins. Moreover, since both streams of sources share common narrative features, most notably anecdotes relating to construction of a royal palace by the Apostle and anecdotes surrounding the martyrdom of Thomas, the issue of borrowing from one or the other continues to remain problematic. Nevertheless, despite contradictory and corroborative elements within various sources of the tradition, and notwithstanding whatever common features may be shared, all sources have received serious consideration.

Among dozens of scholars who devoted their lives to research on this subject, perhaps no single modern scholar compiled more data than Henri Hosten, SJ (1873–1935).[1] Alphonse Mingana, always sceptical of the entire tradition, was amazed to find that research scholars had 'resuscitated from the grave of oblivion the question of St. Thomas' evangelization of India'.[2] But he was also not surprised that those who counted themselves among the descendants of India's most ancient Christian communities took this matter so seriously. Attention to Indocentric perspectives requires that what Thomas Christians hold as canonical be examined, both carefully and critically.

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[1] His magnum opus, entitled *Antiquities from San Thomé and Mylapore* (San Thome, Madras: Diocese of Mylapore, 1936), lay printed and fully ready for publication in 1924, in the Baptist Press of Calcutta.

[2] J. N. Farquhar, *The Apostle Thomas in North India* (Manchester: Rylands Library Bulletin, 1926), 10: 1, 80–111; and in J. N. Farquhar, *The Apostle Thomas in South India* (Manchester: Rylands Library Bulletin, 1927).

The Thomas Tradition

Thomas Christians of India have themselves tended to fashion their own full rich heritage of historical understandings in ways comparable to how such understandings of ancient India were long fashioned by virtually all other elite communities within the Indian continent. Each community, from out of its own store of cultural and material resources, sought to preserve its own oral traditions, its own epic historical narratives (*itihasa-puranas*), and its own narrative genealogies or lineages (*vamshāvalis*). Family members told and retold their own stories—about how their own family and their own community first came into being; how much adversity they suffered or how great the good fortune that came to them or brought them honour and status; how their own people first settled onto special lands or gained special distinction; and, among other things, how they first developed their own unique institutions. From generation to generation, children listened: during evenings, after the sun went down and in times before lights were abundant, enthralled by stories that told about their own ancestral origins. Embedded in what was heard, in the form of bardic songs and oral traditions—and in what eyes beheld, in epigraphic copper and stone inscriptions, as well as on palm-leaf manuscripts—were hallowed sources of narratives that were ritually celebrated, danced, and sung.

Within the Thomas Tradition, details about the arrival of the Apostle Thomas, his landing on the Island of Malankara, and events subsequent to his arrival seem to have been repeated by rote, in song and verse, for generations untold. Malankara was located inside a lagoon not far from the ancient city of Muziris, also later known as Kodungallur (aka Cranganore)—or Mahadevapattanam. The oldest internal traditions concerned a common belief that the Apostle came by sea from Arabia, that he landed on the Malabar coast within a lagoon that was open to the sea, and that this was located close to the historic seaport of Kodungallur. The city of Kodungallur, located at the deltic mouth of the Periyar and variously known down through the centuries as Muziris, Shinkli, Cranganore, and a dozen other names, was recorded from the time of the Periplus (*c.* AD 50) to Al Biruni (970), and to Assemani (aka Assemanus, 1719). This seems to have been the great entrepôt for trans-shipment and trade between the east and west, the north, and the south. Maritime traffic, passing through Kodungallur from overseas locations, played an all important part in its history. Shipping was driven by predictable monsoon winds directly across the Arabian Sea from cities in the west (e.g. Alexandria, Aden), with ready access to coastal shipping up to the Indus (leading to Taxila/Gandhara); beyond to Ormuz and Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia; or, with ships hugging the coasts,

linking the imperial Cheras and Cholas to the mouths of the Ganga and, passing the Straits of Malacca, to the seaports of imperial China.

There can be little doubt concerning the strategic importance of Malankara for the Thomas Tradition. This is held to be the first landing place of the Gospel in India. As celebrated in song and verse for generations untold, lyrical sagas, such as the *Margam Kali Pattu*, the *Rabban Pattu*, and the *Thomma Parvam*, tell about 'the Coming of the Way of the Son of God' into the lineages of families.

But the oldest external traditions seem also to suggest that the Apostle might first have come to India overland, that he arrived in the Indo–Bactrian/ Indo–Parthian north, at the court of a monarch named Gonopharus (Gondopharnes in Greek), and that he later went down to the south. Interpreters of these two traditions, and various sources linked to them, have faced the daunting task of trying to reconcile the various separate narratives and attempting to integrate them, all the while sifting and winnowing what may be solid grounds for establishing their historicity from outside of the traditions themselves.[3]

The Acts of Thomas

It is important to bear in mind, at this point, that the Apostle Thomas, like all followers and disciples of Jesus, was Jewish. The earliest literary account of the Apostle's missionary work in India is found in the *Acts of Thomas*. This ancient text, of unknown origin, language, or provenance, comes from outside the continent itself. Its oldest surviving versions are in Syriac. Scholars have traced it back at least to third- or fourth-century Edessa. All extant versions clearly show, from content and from contextual details, that the document itself could have originated in the second century. A wonderfully colourful narrative that mingles allegory, fantasy, and romance with known events, peoples, and places, this is the oldest surviving account left by any congregation beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire in the East. Noteworthy for its linking of Thomas with India, circumstances also link the text to the 'Babylonian' or 'Chaldean' congregations of Edessa. Edessa, as the capital of the small principality of Osrhoene, located in what is now upper Iraq, was caught between the upper and nether military machines of Parthia and Rome. Claiming apostolic legitimacy comparable to that of Antioch and Rome, Edessa's Christians 'published' numerous works, such as the Abgar legend of Judas Thomas, their own versions of the *Acts of Thomas*, and other works, such as a hymn by Ephrem (aka Emphraem) of Nisibis (d. 373). These works stressed links between believers and clergy

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[3] J. N. Farquhar, in *The Apostle Thomas in North India*; and in *The Apostle Thomas in South India*.

of Edessa and India. Other, later versions of the *Acts of Thomas* appeared in Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Greek, Latin, and other languages, suggesting that this work retained an enduring and mythic popularity throughout the Christian world of ancient times.[4]

The story itself, repeated in various forms and applied to different venues, with applications both to North and South India, commences in the Upper Room, shortly after the Ascension. In response to the Great Commission, 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel', the Apostles of Jesus, having elected Matthias to restore the ranks of the Twelve (in place of Judus Iscariot), divided the known world into regions and drew lots over who should be assigned to go and bring the Gospel of Jesus to each of these parts of the world. The assignment of going to India fell to Judas Thomas, also known as 'the Twin' (*Didymus*). Thomas is referred to within this text as the 'brother of Jesus'. Ever the doubter, sceptic, and curmudgeon, Thomas objected. Excuses for refusing to go were put forward. The fact that he was a Hebrew, he argued, would not only make it difficult to communicate with such distant and strange peoples in their various native languages, but would also expose him to the dangers of becoming defiled by exposure to non-kosher food. In response, according to the text, his brother Apostles immediately fell to their knees and earnestly pleaded for God to bring about a change of heart in their brother Apostle. And then, that very moment, even as their prayers were ascending to heaven, their prayers were being answered and a miraculous set of events began to occur.

During that night, the Lord Jesus himself appeared to Thomas (perhaps in a dream?) and said, 'Don't be fearful, Thomas. Go to India and preach the Word there, for my Grace is with you.' When Thomas objected, saying, 'I'll go anywhere but to India, Lord', Jesus reassured him and promised to be with him. At the very moment that these words were being exchanged, a royal envoy from India was arriving from the south. A wealthy merchant named Abban came, with orders from Gundaphar, an Indo-Bactrian or Indo-Parthian monarch who we now know ruled over what is the Punjab and Afghanistan, to bring back a skilled master architect and builder (or 'carpenter'),[5] to construct a grand royal palace. Jesus, the text relates, went to meet Abban, walking in the street; and informed him that he had just the right person to accomplish this task. After giving Abban a glimpse of

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[4] 'Acts of Thomas', in J. K. Elliot (ed.), *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993 [1924]), 439–511; and A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2003 [1962]), translated from a surviving Syriac text, as derived from earlier originals.

[5] It may be useful to remember, in this regard, that few builders in the Middle East of that time, any more than in our day, would have built structures made of wood, and would not have used wood except for doors and windows, and furnishings.

Thomas, who was standing not far away, and after haggling over the price, Jesus accepted twenty pieces of silver and wrote out a bill of sale. This declared: 'I, Jesus, son of Joseph the Carpenter, from the Village of Bethlehem . . . acknowledge that I have sold my slave Judas Thomas to Abban, merchant of King Gundaphar.' When the purchase was complete, the Saviour took Judas Thomas by the hand and led him to Abban who, having ascertained from Thomas that Jesus was indeed his Lord and Master, informed Thomas that he had been purchased.

The following morning, after again praying, 'Lord, I shall go wherever you wish', the Apostle departed with Abban and helped to load baggage onto a ship. He carried with him nothing except the price in silver that had been paid for his purchase. This the Lord Jesus had given him, so that he could purchase his redemption at any time or whenever he wished. Once Abban and Thomas were on board the ship, the Apostle was asked what kind of work he was capable of doing. When his newly purchased slave responded by indicating that he was skilled at working 'in wood, ploughs, and yokes; in balances; in ships and oars and masts; in stone pillars; in temples, and fortresses and royal palaces', the royal merchant was satisfied. He and his charge immediately set off together on the long journey back to India. Many strange and wonderful adventures befell them along the way, often accompanied by miracles. Upon disembarking at Sandarūk (Andrapolis), they heard the sounds of flutes and trumpets and singing. A royal wedding for the king's only daughter was being celebrated and they were invited to attend. During several days of festivities, a Jewish 'flute-girl' whom Thomas befriended became a convert. Shortly thereafter, the royal bride herself and her husband-to-be also proclaimed faith in Christ. But when the princess then refused to participate in the ceremony on grounds of conscience, the king was so furious with the Apostle that he and his master had to make a hasty departure in order to avert the consequences of apostolic intrusion.

Upon reaching the royal court of Gundaphar (Gondaphorus, Gondophares), a huge treasure taken from accumulated revenues of the kingdom was placed into the hands of the Apostle, along with orders for the construction of a luxurious new palace. Before departing on a long journey, or pilgrimage, the king informed Thomas that he expected the work to be done by the time of his return. But what the Apostle encountered within the kingdom profoundly disturbed him. He found himself surrounded on every hand by a population that was suffering in abject misery and poverty and oppressed by a hard-hearted, luxury-sated, and unfeeling aristocratic gentry, and by harsh oppressive rulers. Stricken at the sight of countless poor and sick peoples living in dire want, and outraged at the profligate opulence of the rich, Thomas felt compelled do all in his power to alleviate their

plight. After devoting all his efforts to that end, he used up all the funds that had been given him for constructing the palace. In due time, the day of reckoning came. The king returned from his journey and asked for a glimpse of his new palace. The Apostle, bowing low before Gundaphar, informed him that his new palace was complete and that it was ready and waiting for him. But when asked to be given a tour of his new palace, the king was informed that he would have to wait until he reached heaven and that the earthly possessions of the king had been expended for alleviating the sufferings of the poor and sick. With royal resources, the Apostle had been 'teaching about a new God, healing the sick, driving out demons and doing wonderful things [in the name] of the new God of whom he was preaching' (*Acts of Thomas* 1: 1920 [paraphrased here]). On hearing these words, the king became extremely angry and, after immediately throwing both Thomas and Abban into prison, determined to have both men executed as soon as possible. But, that very night, the king's brother (Gad) died and went to heaven. In heaven, after being given a glimpse of the glorious palace that Thomas had built for his brother, he begged for a chance to return to earth so that he might warn his brother and tell him what he had seen. Granted this boon, Gad rushed to tell his brother what he had seen in heaven. As soon as Gundaphar heard his brother's words, he turned to Christ and became a believer. So too did members of his entire entourage. It is possible to surmise, as some versions seem to indicate, that this information had come to Gundaphar in a dream. Whatever the case, upon profession of faith in Jesus, the new converts soon received the three requisite signs or tokens of divine grace from the Apostle: anointing with oil ('the seal'), baptism ('the added seal'), and communion ('bread and wine' of the Eucharist) (*Acts of Thomas* 2: 22–7). Thereafter, as deacons and elders became trained, they became pastors who served rapidly growing congregations of new believers within the kingdom.

The Apostle subsequently set off on further journeys, both within India and beyond. The *Acts of Thomas* gives a narrative of certain later events, including miracles, that transpired during the establishment of congregations in other parts of the continent. But most of the last part of the *Acts of Thomas* is connected to events surrounding the martyrdom of the Apostle. Thomas met his death, on order of King Mazdai, by being pierced by the spears of soldiers. The exact location of Mazdai's realm is not mentioned in the text. Other traditions indicate that this event occurred on a hill outside the city of Mylapore (Mailapur: now a suburb of Madras, aka Chennai).[6]

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[6] In southern traditions, as found in *Margam Kali Pattam* and the *Thomma Parvam*, the palace was for a Chola monarch in Chola territory; and the martyrdom was instigated by Brahmans when Thomas refused to offer worship to the goddess Kali and when her sacred grove was consumed by fire. The monarch then took the body and buried it at the top of a mount at Mylapore.

Events leading to the martyrdom itself resulted from radical teachings that disrupted the marital relations of two royal officials; and then of the king himself. In proclaiming the Gospel, Thomas brought about the conversion and baptism of several prominent women, including Queen Tertia herself, and her son Vazan. But, inspired by her conversion, the queen forsook the marriage bed. Her thoroughly provoked husband, despite many pleas, was unable to persuade her to end her puritanical resistance. Finally, he became so infuriated that he ordered soldiers to take Thomas away and execute him. This, the text informs us, had to be done discreetly and secretly since any overt or public action against the Apostle ran the danger of provoking a full rebellion among the king's subjects. Thus, Thomas was taken to the Mount just outside the City. Surrounded by the spears of his executioners, the Apostle asked to be allowed some last words. He then prayed aloud: 'My Lord and my God, my Hope and Redeemer ... I have fulfilled the work you gave me and obeyed your commands. Hitherto bound by your commands, today I receive my final freedom' (*Acts of Thomas* 13: 167; *John* 20: 28).

Exactly how much of this romantic tale, with its epic, its fabulous or questionable elements, can be trusted or considered to rest upon some small residue of actual events or fitted into contexts of verifiable historicity is highly doubtful. Yet, despite its questionable historicity, the documents retain great popularity and strength within the Thomas Tradition. As such, it can be seen in several distinct forms—as part of an external and northern (or overland) tradition and also as part of a southern tradition. They were written both to glorify the Apostle himself and to magnify the importance of the Church of the East at Edessa. Edessa claimed Thomas as its founder and, lying in contested lands between the immense imperial systems of Parthia and Rome, used the document to legitimize, preserve, or reinforce its precarious claims to political autonomy. Whatever residues of historical substance this source may possess, therefore, can never be fully ascertained. Mingana opens his own essay on this subject with the words, 'Almost all the critics of the latter half of the nineteenth century had pronounced a negative verdict on the question of the historicity of the mission of Thomas, and relegated it to the swollen catalogues of apocryphal fiction, classed in the domain of what we generally call myth.'[7] He then goes on to show how this judgement was gradually being overturned, citing Farquhar, Medlycott, Dahlmann, and others to support opposite views.

What is definitely known, however, and what is confirmed from archaeological and numismatic findings, is the fact that a king named Gundaphar

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[7] A. Mingana, in his *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1926), reprinted from *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 10: 2 (July 1926), 80–111.

(also spelled Gondophares in Greek), together with his brother Gad, actu-
ally did reign over a kingdom within a huge Indo–Bactrian (or Indo-
Parthian) empire that bestrode both sides of the Indus River during the
years from AD 19 to 55 and that Kushana forces from the north soon
destroyed the regime. Coin troves dug up during the past two centuries
have established the basic substructure and veracity of historical facts relating
to the actual reign of this king and his rule over this territory. This writer,
thanks to the kindness of one of his most gifted *chelas*, the late and much
lamented Peter Wood, possesses one of these coins (dated *c.* AD 30 to 55).
This king was totally unknown to history until large numbers of coins
bearing his name were discovered. On his coins are such words, in Karoshti,
as Guduphara or Godapharna; and in Greek, as Gondophares—a term
perhaps representing versions of the Persian 'Vindapharna' or 'The Winner
of Glory'. Bactrian Greek rulers of the Punjab, ultimately overcome by Saka
tribes of Central Asia, had previously established a principality at Taxila.
One of their monarchs was a Parthian prince known to Greeks as Gondo-
phares who, circa AD 55, ruled Taxila, Sistan, Sindh, western Punjab,
southern Afghanistan, and probably part of the Parthian dominions west
of Sistan. As such, he was considered to be both an Indian and a Parthian.
Quite clearly also, if a king by this name did rule in Punjab during the very
years when the Apostle might have been able to carry the Gospel to that part
of the world, this 'coin document' possesses enough validity to lend shreds
of plausibility to the *Acts of Thomas*. Within this and other externally
preserved apocryphal texts, one can find the gist of what may be called
the northern branch of sources for the Thomas Tradition. These sources, by
themselves, will never suffice to validate that Tradition; but, in combination
with more numerous and richer sources in the south, the *Acts of Thomas* can
not be totally ignored.[8]

The Thomas Parvam *and Other Evidence*

Much more data supporting the Thomas Tradition rests upon internal
sources found within South India.[9] These sources give clearer and more

[8] For photographs of prize samples among hundreds of coins uncovered, see Hosten, *Antiquities from San Thomé and Mylapore*, plate 27 facing p. 358. See Farquhar, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, ICHC i. 313 ff.; Sir John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Photographs of Gondophares coins are in A. E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas* (London: David Nutt 1905); in ICHC, i. 191; in *A Guide to Taxila*, plate III (18); and, finally, Gordon Whitteridge, *Charles Masson of Afghanistan* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1986), 68–9. It was Masson, the American explorer, who first discovered these coin troves.

[9] Msgr. Texeira of Madras: 'The Malabar tradition is not written on hard stone [*sic*] or sheets of parchment, but in the hearts and memories of men, assuredly as enduring a monument as those of granite and the like', in George Menachery, *The Nazranies* (Tiruvanthapuram: Sanjose [for

specific indications of how what are now known as Thomas Christians, also known as Syrian Christians, came into being and how they came to be concentrated in the south-west corner of India, in what is now the state of Kerala (formerly the princely states of Travancore and Cochin). Dating from the earliest centuries of the Christian (or Common) Era, these southern sources underlying the Thomas Tradition consist of carefully preserved oral sagas, literary texts, genealogies, epigraphic and numismatic data on stone tablets and copper plates and coins of copper, silver, and gold (as well as billon), and architectural remains. Stone crosses of great antiquity, perhaps dating back to the second century, and attributed to the Apostle himself, also can be found in Quilon, Niranam, Kotamamgalam, Kottuk-kayal (Paravur), Chayal, and Palayur.[10]

Distilled to their essentials, indigenous narratives relating to the trad-itional origins of the Thomas Christian community contain the following elements: that the Apostle landed either on the Island of Malankara or on the adjacent mainland of coastal Malabar; that he lived and worked there for a number of years; that he sailed around the Cape of Comorin (Kaniya Kumari) and up the Coromandel coast; that he stopped at Mylapore (or Mailapur; that, after going on to China, he returned to Malabar (*c.* AD 58); that he settled in Tiruvanchikkulam (near Kodungallur or Cranganore, also known in ancient times as Muziris) where he remained long enough to strengthen the seven original congregations of Malankara, Chayal, Kota-mamgalam, Niranam, Paravur (Kottukkayal), Palayur, and Quilon; that having trained leaders (*achāryas* and *gurus*) among converts from high-caste families for the leadership of each congregation, the Apostle departed from Malabar for the last time (*c.* AD 69), leaving behind a strong, self-propagat-ing, and self-sustaining community of Christians; and, finally, that having travelled widely, he made converts in Mylapore (Mailapur), now a suburb on the southern outskirts of Madras (now renamed Chennai). There he was martyred in the year 73, pierced by spear thrusts inspired by irate Brahmans.

The *Thomma Parvam*, or Song of Thomas, is perhaps the earliest account.[11] Still sung at ceremonial occasions, especially for marriages, this describes how 'the Way [*Margam*] of the Son of God' came into the country from Arabia when Thomas arrived at Malankara in December of AD 52 (or 50 in some versions), how conversions occurred among Jews living in

SARAS], 1998), 23. This statement seems to forget numerous stone monuments and copper-plate epigraphic inscriptions.

[10] Leslie Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas: An Account of the Ancient Syrian Church of Malabar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982 [originally 1956]), 49–51.

[11] Ibid. 49 n. traces one version of this work to Thomas Ramban (1601) who, in turn, traced it back forty-eight generations to Maliyekkal Thoma Ramban.

Tiruvanchikkulam or Kodungallur (Cranganore), and how the local king, having taken the name of Andrew, allowed his nephew Keppa to become ordained as a *kattanar* (pastor/priest). Thereafter, Thomas took the Gospel to Quilon where he baptized 1,400 new believers and 'set up a cross of beautiful fashion that all might worship . . .' Next, Thomas went east into domains of the Chola rajas where, at Mylapore, having given away money that had been advanced to him for the building of a palace, he was about to be killed when the raja's brother rose from the dead to tell about the splendid royal palace that Thomas had built for the raja in heaven. The days of Thomas ended in Mylapore. There, after refusing commands to worship the image of Kali being carried in a procession to a sacred grove, he was stabbed to death with a trident spear (*trishul*) at the instigation of Brahmans, on 3 July 73 (AD).[12] Days later he appeared and instituted a ceremonial feast of remembrance (*dukhana*), an event that is still celebrated.

This best known of all poetic expressions of the Thomas Tradition goes so far as to give a demographic and social breakdown (*varnāshramadharma*) of hereditary groups (castes). Based on lineage narratives (*vamshvālis*), this work provides a glimpse of the social make-up of the earliest Christian community in Malabar that, by tradition, the Apostle left behind: namely, 6,850 Brahmans, 2,800 Kshatriyas, 3,750 Vaishiyas, and 4,250 Shudras—the whole coming to more than 17,480 souls.[13] Significantly, no mention is made of what 'others' (i.e. aboriginals or untouchables: *Adivāsis* and *Dalits* in today's argot) might also have become part of this Christian community. Such groups, in terms of texts already outlining Brahmanical views of the social structure, would not have been worth counting. Such peoples, scarcely more than dust, could only be polluting seen—a perspective that hardly reflected values of the Gospel. But what were worth counting were manifold deeds that were seen as miraculous events—namely, healings and deliverances performed by the Apostle—94 souls delivered from death; 260 from devils; 230 from leprosy; 220 from paralysis; and 250 from blindness.

Oral traditions, palm-leaf manuscripts, copper-plate epigraphy, and stone inscriptions, many of them still preserved by leading families who have claimed descent from Brahman and Nayar lineages, give details which, by tradition, describe the many travels, habitations, and places visited by the

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[12] The *Margam Kali Pāttam* gives the day as 21 December, whereas many Thomas Christians annually celebrate the arrival of the Apostle at Malankara, or on the Malabar coast, in the year 52, on the 3rd day of July.

[13] Revd Henri Hosten, *The Song of Thomas Ramban* (Darjeeling: St Joseph's College, 1931). Also found in Menachery, *The Nazranies*, 521 (verses 148–52). The text of this work (composed by Thomas Ramban for use of the Niranam congregation in 1601) was based on an oral rendition of the *Thoma Parvam* handed down forty-eight generations from Maliyekkal Thoma Ramban.

Apostle. These, according to Placid J. Podipara, one of many authorities who devoted many years to studying Thomas Christian texts,[14] makes clear that many Thomas Christian families of Kerala still trace the original conversion of their community to the time of the Apostle, or to any of a number of migrations which occurred during the many centuries prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. *Vamshvālis* and *purānas* (lineage histories and historical legends) claim hereditary authority within certain elite families, through which *kattanars* (pastors) or *metrans* (bishops or elders) descended from one generation to the next, with nephew succeeding uncle (mother's brother) in unbroken lineages of inherited positions. On the basis of this kind of institutionalized apostolic succession, sometimes claiming to go all the way back to Thomas, some families were able to trace themselves for as many as fifty, sixty, or even seventy unbroken generations of office holders. At the top of the list are the names of four Namboodiri Brahman Christian families, tracing their conversions back to the Apostle: Sankarapuri, Pakalomattam, Kalli, and Kaliyankal. Among names of other leading families with claims to hoary distinction are the following: Kalikay, Kottakali, Kayakkam, Madeipur, Muttal, Nedumpalli, and Panakkamattam. Artefacts, especially stone crosses and monuments preserved by *kattanar* families and villages, reinforce their claims to antiquity. Near one ancient building at Palayur, it is claimed, Brahmans abandoned one older temple tank that was used for apostolic baptisms in order to avoid pollution that bathing or drinking would bring upon them.

  These various sources, taken together, extend the story further. They claim: that the Apostle came to Mylapore (Mailapur), perhaps in AD 69 and that he met a martyr's death in the year 73; that a local raja imprisoned Thomas when money entrusted to him for constructing a palace was distributed to the poor; that the raja's brother who had just died was restored to life in order to tell his sibling about heavenly palaces which the Apostle had built; and that the brother's testimony convinced the raja and 700 members of his court to accept the Gospel and become baptized. Another tradition indicates that the Apostle's days subsequently came to a dramatic end when, while walking near Little Mount (near Mylapore), he was confronted by Brahmans leading a procession for the purpose of making a blood sacrifice to the goddess Kali; after which the Apostle, having refused to join the sacrifice, so infuriated the crowd that they attacked and slew him, piercing his side with a three-pronged spear (*trishul* or trident). A prayer pronouncing words that are alleged to have come from the martyr's lips as he was dying is still regularly sung by Thomas Christians, on the third day of

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[14] Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians* (Madras: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970); *The Thomas Christians and their Syriac Treasures* (Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1974).

July each year, to commemorate the historic arrival and mission of the Apostle to India.

Traditions relating to the burial place of the Apostle—near Mylapore (Mailapur), at the little white shrine which still adorns the top of the hill which for centuries uncounted has been known as St Thomas Mount—continued to give special saliency to indigenous forms of 'Apostolic' Christianity in India. Many centuries before the Portuguese arrival, healing powers were attributed to this shrine and its surroundings, even to the dust on its footpaths. Whatever dubious historicity may be attached to such local traditions, there can be little doubt as to their great antiquity or to their great appeal in popular imagination. Such imaginations are certainly as strong as those supporting claims concerning the rise of early Christian communities in many other parts of Europe.[15]

The Church of the East

Traders, settlers, and refugees came from the West to the shores of India. They came individually or in groups, in fits and starts, over many centuries. Commercial relations between the Indian and Roman worlds increased after the rediscovery, during the first century, of seasonal winds (monsoons) that predictably and steadily blew ships across the Arabian Sea to India during certain months of each year and then just as predictably and steadily blew them back across the same sea to the shores of Africa and Arabia. In both Strabo's *Geography*[16] and the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (*c.* AD 47),[17] by an unknown mariner writing about the time of Thomas, we learn that fleets of ships with up to seven sails and 300 tons in size moved back and forth across this sea. Roman Peace (*Pax Romana*) helped to bring increasing traffic and prosperity to the littoral fringes of the Indian Ocean.[18] Romans themselves, we know from archaeological findings in South India, built colonies along the shorelines of India; and Indians themselves moved into the marketplaces of Egypt where Greeks and Arabs, Jews and Syrians,

[15] Or, to repeat, Thomas Christians themselves can often be heard to recite: 'Show me the evidence for Peter going to Rome, and I shall show you the evidence for Thomas coming to India.'

[16] *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer, 3 vols. (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–7).

[17] *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea & Ptolemy on Ancient Geography of India*, ed. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya (Calcutta: Praja, 1980). While this informs us that the monsoon was discovered by a Greek named Hippalus, few doubt that knowledge of seasonal winds was of much greater antiquity. One of many treatments of ancient Greek texts, a historical geography of India in the context of *Geographike* by Claudius Ptolemaeus, a Greek scholar, and *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, 1st-century anonymous travelogue.

[18] E. H. Warmington, *Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928).

Armenians and Persians benefited. Sanskrit and Tamil epics mention *Yavana* (Greek) ships laden with glass, gold, and horses, which returned with gems, ivory, pepper, exotic animals and birds, especially peacocks. Greek work-men were used to build Chola palaces.[19] One tradition, as already shown above, even transfers the substance of the *Acts of Thomas* legend from the Indo–Bactrian to a Chola monarch of Madurai. Thus, whatever historicity the story and tradition of Thomas may or may not possess, historical evidence confirms that comparable events did happen during the time of Thomas and that these occurred at the same times and in the same places. Thus, it is entirely plausible to conclude that such events might have involved the Apostle Thomas himself.

Hints of early Christian presence in India are found in writings which date only a century or two later than AD 73, the date of Thomas's death, as this has been preserved in local traditions of Thomas Christians. From Alexandria, the citadel of early Christian learning, a Jewish-Christian scholarly convert named Pantaenus, who had been mentor to Clement and Origen, deter-mined 'to preach Christ to the Brahmans and philosophers'.[20] According to Eusebius, he went as far as India 'and found that Matthew's gospel had arrived before him and was in the hands of some there who had come to know Christ'. Whether this 'India' was the same, or even the real, India to which Pantaenus went cannot be determined; however, 'Brahmans' men-tioned by Jerome could hardly have come from anywhere but India. More-over, Jewish communities such as the ancient Beni Israel, dating themselves back to the first Exile, had already long been settled along the shores of western India; and more Jews arrived after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, with yet another wave following them in the year 136. Thus, there can be no reason to doubt that Christian and Jewish communities were already settled along the shores of the subcontinent by the second century. Muslim communities arose along the same coasts only 400 years later.

Evidence of links between Christians in Parthian Persia and Christians of Edessa (now Urfa in modern Turkey) is strong. Due to the religious pluralism of Parthian rulers, Christians were able to organize a religious community and to become an important minority within the Persian Empire. This community seems to have consisted mainly of middle-class, mercantile and professional families whose members were well off. They became known for their skills and occupied prominent positions of trust in

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[19] Arikamedu, for example, was a Roman station regularly guarded by two cohorts of troops: cf. R. C. Mortimer Wheeler et al., *Ancient India* (July 1945). About its expense Pliny complained. Such well-known classics of ancient Tamil as the *Silapppadikaram*, *Manimekhalai*, and *Pattinippalai*, not to mention *Puranas*, also mention *Yavana* (Greek) soldiers, etc.

[20] Jerome, taken from James Noll Ogilvie, *The Apostles of India* (London: Baird Lecture, 1915) (taken from 'Eusebius: V.10.1').

medicine, science, and government. As already mentioned, Edessa, the capital of a tiny principality known as Osrhoene, was so tightly squeezed between the empires of Rome and Parthia that it was often under pressure from one power or the other. Even so, it became a leading centre of Christian culture. Its language, the Aramaic dialect known as Syriac, became the literary and liturgical language for all 'Eastern' (Assyrian, Babylonian, Chaldean, or Persian) Christians. Its theological schools and scholars became famous. Among them was Addai, or Tatian (b. 150), whose polemic against Greek cultural dominance over Christian institutions and whose *Diatessaron* or Harmony of the Four Gospels, while condemned in the West, long remained the only Gospel available to Christians and churches of the East. During the reign of Abgar VIII (AD 177–212), Christians of Edessa and Persia became caught up in theological controversies with the West. One of these was over the date of Easter. When Romans conquered Edessa in AD 216, Christians of Mesopotamia and Persia, once again caught in the middle between the two empires, became increasingly suspect. Adeshir, founder of the Sassanian dynasty (in 226) and restorer of Zoroastrian religious dominance, had hardly reconquered Edessa and Syria in 258 when he captured the Roman Emperor Valerian. Zoroastrian priests (*mobeds*) then mounted fierce and deadly campaigns against Christians within Sassanian domains. Calamity struck Christians of the East again over a century later. On Good Friday, 17 April AD 341, at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital twin cities bestriding the Tigris, Shapur II put to death the Catholicos, Simon Bar Sabbae, and over a hundred prominent Christian leaders within his realm. Many years of martyrdom and suffering followed.

Following the promulgation of Yezdgerd's Edict of Toleration in AD 410, an event in the East that can perhaps be compared to the Edict of Constantine eight-five years earlier in the West, the Persian Church enjoyed a limited time of restoration and comparative tranquillity. This reached its zenith under the ecclesiastical rule of Catholicos Isaac, 'Grand Metropolitan and Head of All Bishops'. But, during the previous century, theological disputes with Christians of the West had produced a deepening rift with Eastern Christians. After the creeds of 325 and 381 ended the Arian controversy by declaring that Christ was 'one in essence with the Father', Christological disagreements between Cyril (Bishop of Alexandria) and Nestorius (Bishop of Constantinople) remained unsettled. More seriously, theologians at Edessa, (Assyria, Chaldea, and Persia) and throughout the Sassanid Empire beyond the boundaries of Byzantium, refused to view Mary as *Theotokos* or 'Mother of God'. Thus, after 422, especially after the Council of Ephesus in 431, ties with the West became weaker. The Patriarchate of Babylon or 'The Church of the East', during times when free from persecution, continued to hold increasing and unchallenged sway

among Christians of Persia and India. The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, for all practical purposes, finally ended such disputes in the West. But debates in the East continued, seriously undermining and weakening the inner strength of Eastern Christian communities, especially those that lay beyond the reach of Byzantium—in Persia and beyond.

Just one century before many Eastern Christians fell beneath the shadow of *dar-ul-Islam*, an Indian Christian traveller from Alexandria visited the Island of Socotra and the West coast of India. In his *Christian Topography* (*c.* AD 535), Cosmas Indikopleustes described Syrian Christian bishops and communities that he found along the coasts of India and Sri Lanka. By then wars between Sassanid and the Eastern Roman rulers of Byzantium had begun to bring more waves of refugees to India; moreover, severe political pressures within Persia prompted a further severance of Christian bonds between East and West. By then also, the Patriarch of Babylon (or Chaldea) had long claimed ecclesiastical authority over Malabar Christians.

The Roman Catholic epithet for these Christians, as for most Christians of the East, was 'Nestorian'. This term, applied by Western Christians to all Christians of India at the end of the sixth century, was much more a matter of ecclesiastical and geographical distinction than it was a term applied to any theological, or 'diophysite', doctrine, or of rituals related thereto. Meanwhile, even as missionary ventures across Asia and into China continued to grow, doing so well into the thirteenth century, Muslim expansion (632–42) effectively cut off the East from Byzantium and the West, doing so more effectively than any previous event. A drastic and diminishing communication thereafter closed off occasions for theological or ecclesiastical conciliation between East and West.

The question of why Christianity disappeared in so much of Persia, as also from many parts of Arabia, and vanished so completely, remains largely unanswered. At least two possible factors have been suggested as having played an important part in this disappearance. First, in various forms of Syrian and Persian Christianity—stemming from Antioch and Babylon, as from Edessa—language was allowed to become a barrier between clerical leadership and ordinary believers. The language of the Church, Syriac (a form of Aramaic), became the exclusive preserve of the learned and literate, the only vehicle through which the Gospel, biblical literature, theological learning, and liturgy was transmitted from one generation to the next. In Persia and other lands to the east of Mesopotamia, Syriac was not the tongue of the common people. Efforts made to translate some Scripture, sermons, and religious discourses, especially hymns, into Pahlavi, were not effective; and, for the most part, the language of the Church remained alien and could not be understood by the majority of those Christians who were not learned or not literate. Persian elites, as also elites

in various parts of India, held a great affection for the beauty of their language. The failure of Christians to use Persian for purposes of faith and worship, doctrine, and scholarship left an enormous void of residual ignorance, a gulf which could not easily be bridged. The same situation seems to have been replicated among Christians in India.[21]

Second, institutions of Christianity in the East became increasingly, if not predominantly, monastic in character and celibate in normative social behaviour. As a consequence, very little is known about the daily life of the ordinary Christian believer, either in Persia or in other eastern lands. While extraordinary missionary efforts and ventures were undertaken, carrying the Gospel to China and India, if not to islands beyond, both the faith and the faithful became increasingly isolated and relegated to the elite few. Strict celibacy was equated with spirituality: some even suggested that celibacy might be mandatory for gaining eternal salvation. The great Persian saint and scholar Aphrates had written as early as the fourth century that Christians had become divided into two groups: the 'Offspring of the Covenant' (*Bar Qiyama*) and the 'Penitents'. Those dedicated to an ascetic and celibate life could be baptized while those who were not so inclined were sometimes denied baptism.[22] This virtually Manichaean separation between the tiny elite and the masses, between those dwelling in the Light and those consigned to living in Darkness, coming at a time when the Church faced a strong and hostile state religion that inflicted persecutions over long periods of time, greatly weakened the Christian community and left it vulnerable. And while the bar between marriage and baptism did not last, the strict rules of the Bar Qiyama continued to be upheld—with celibacy, prolonged periods of fasting and prayer, vows of poverty, simplicity of food and garb, ceaseless study, and silence. Such world renouncing was not attractive to Zoroastrians. Such ways were viewed as a blasphemy against life itself. Ironically, with the coming of Islam, both Christians and Zoroastrians were driven out of Persia. Sunni Islam, at least initially, was averse to asceticism and elitism alike, striving to obliterate all distinctions between the religious and not so religious, between specialists and ordinary people. Armenian Christians, coming from the homelands and strongholds to the north and west, managed to maintain a more clear and distinct

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[21] Of course, some may argue, language barriers also prevailed elsewhere, as in Latin Christianity and in Islam among non-Arabic speakers. When Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Nordic rulers converted to Christianity; family members who entered the clergy strengthened bonds with the laity, as also for revered *mullahs* within *dar-ul-Islam*. In the East, where unconverted rulers were influenced by learned non-Christian priesthoods, Christian belief among ordinary Christians could have destructive consequences.

[22] Arthur Vööbus, *Celibacy, A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951). Aphrates, in this respect, may have reflected, in some measure, the Zoroastrianism from which he had been converted.

identity within Islamic lands than some other Christians. From their home-
land, this striving and thriving Christian community did well within the
Islamicates of the East in the centuries which followed.[23]

The Waves of Refugees

From an Indian perspective, arrivals of successive waves of Christians on the
western shores of India, taking place at various times over centuries, either
as refugees and settlers and traders, can be documented. Such waves can be
dated by looking at royal grants of lands and privileges which Christians
received. These grants, duly certified as deeds or documents, were inscribed
on copper plates, stone slabs, and/or palm leaf (*cadjan*). These were later
embellished and reinforced by oral traditions.

One such tradition indicates that, as early as AD 293, a great persecution
occurred within the Chola kingdom ('Cholamandalam' along the east
coast). Seventy-six families fled to Malabar and settled among Christians
of Quilon. Some of these then came under the influence of a Tamil Shaiva
(presumably *bhakti*) teacher who some felt possessed extraordinary powers.
Disputes also arose over religious rites, such as smearing ashes on one's
forehead and venerating the five products of the cow. Apparently, con-
sidering what cannot be found in early sources, virtually no formal church
structures existed that could help to provide doctrinal discipline or ecclesi-
astical control. Such institutional authority, when found, seems to have
come from the Church of the East in Sassanian Persia.

Solid historical evidence of formal church life in India, albeit tenuous,
dates from the year AD 345. In recent years, a combination of rigorous
textual analysis of oral traditions, consisting of folklore within ancient
immigration songs, such as the *Purātanappāṭṭukal* and *Kēralōpatti*, with
intensive archaeological, historical, and textual research into fresh resources
in Mesopotamia (what is now Iraq), has enabled Jacob Kollaparambil to
come up with arguments that tend to set at naught the prejudices and
scepticism of some earlier Eurocentric work by such scholars as Alphonse
Mingana.[24] These tend to confirm the view that, three years after the
beginning of the Great Persian Persecution that stretched from 340 to 401

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[23] A footnote to these events was recorded in far-off England where, for the year AD 883, the
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reported on the conveying of 'alms that the king vowed to send thither, and
to India to St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew'. Some quibble over what was meant by 'India' but
we know that other long journeys of that nature occurred, in both directions.

[24] Syriac documents, translated by Alphonse Mingana, indicate that it was the Catholicos of
Babylon who sent 'Thomas of Kināyi' (alias 'Thomas of Kana' or 'Thomas of Jerusalem') and
Bishop Joseph on this mission. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India*; T. K. Joseph,
Malabar Christians and their Ancient Documents (Trivandrum: Popular Press, 1929). Both Joseph and
Kollaparambil, while not disputing Mingana's translations, take issue with his interpretations.

and just one year after the martyrdom of Catholicos Simon Bar Sabbae, already mentioned above, a community of 'East Syrian' or 'Babylonian' Jewish Christians landed on the Malabar coast. This community consisted of seventy-two 'royal' families from seven clans (or septs), numbering some 400 persons. It was led by a Jewish Christian merchant banker named Thomman Kinnān (Thomas Kināyi) and a bishop (*metran*) named Uraha Mar Yausef (Joseph). These leaders, together with four pastors (*katthanars*) and many deacons, came to India under the authority of the Catholicos of the East in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. As was later to be sung about in the *Nallōrōṟōśilam*, 'He [Thomas] went to Ezra [or Yezra] and obtained Blessing [*Anugraham*]' before embarking. This migration was also celebrated in another song, the Kottayam *Valiyapalli*. Within strophe four of this song, Malankara Nazranis continue to sing the words:

> For great devotion he started / With delight from the country of Uz
> On that day Kinayi Thomma / With seventy-two families.[25]

Other texts indicate that the decision to migrate to Malabar might perhaps have come during a meeting between Joseph, Thomas, and the Catholicos that was held in Jerusalem and that, prior to the embarkation of the community, Thomas had been sent on a reconnaissance mission.

That Thomas was cordially welcomed by the Emperor of Kerala, the Cheraman Perumal, and that the new community received special grants and privileges that were formally certified and engraved on copper plates, specifying exactly what tracts of land were to be occupied by the Christian settlers and what prerogatives of status they were to enjoy, seem beyond doubt. The copper plates themselves, as title deeds, documented the presence of these highly cultivated and gifted newcomers.[26] They were allotted lands by 'extending *ells* measured by an elephant, each being equal to the length of ten palms'.[27] The newly occupied lands were very similar to the alluvial black soil and marshy fields that had been left behind in Uruk

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[25] Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Babylonian Origin of the Southists among the St. Thomas Christians* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1992), 23, quote from J. Vellian, *Purātanap-pāṭṭukal* (Kottayam, 1985), 5 and C. Choondal, *Christian Folk Songs* (Trichur: Kerala Folklore Academy, 1983).

[26] The original two sets of plates mysteriously vanished not long after being shown to Alexis de Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, in 1599. Copies, with exact descriptions of fine metal plates one and a half palms long and four fingers broad, inscribed on both sides, and bound by thick wire, in archaic forms of Syriac, Kufic Arabic, and Malayalam ('Chaldean, Malabar, and Arabic') and translations, give a clear sense of what the original contained. See Joseph, *Malabar Christians*, 3–7, 32–4; and A. Mathias Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob, 1498–1552* (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1967), 170–3.

[27] Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India*, 170.

(Uruha). These lands were located in the delta of the Periya River, not far from the Chemkal estuary on one side or from the city of Kodungallur (Kurumaklur, Cranganore, which was the same as Muziris of ancient times) on the other. In later times, the settlers would move southward, settling on lands bordering black paddy fields east of the Vembanadam backwater lagoons. The places of settlement—Udayamperur, Kottayam, Kaduthur-uthy, and Kallissery, as also Brahmangalam (Karippadam), Kallara, Neendur, Kaipuzha, Mannar, Kuttoor, and Veliyanad—are places in the region where the majority of 'Southists' can still be found. Privileges enjoyed by the Christian immigrants alone included wearing of golden flowers in their hair during weddings, riding on royal elephants or palanquins, use of royal parasols, playing seven kinds of musical instruments, sitting upon carpets, erecting pavilions (*pandals*), use of sandalwood paste, and even allowing their women to whistle with a finger in the mouth as was done by other royal women. Such privileges were allowed only to those who were descended from kings: these Jewish Christians claimed direct descent from the lineage of David.[28]

The year of this arrival was 345. It is embedded in line thirteen of the immigration song, *Mūvaroruvanṯ Kalpanayāle*. It is found in the Malayalam word *sōvāla* and is an alphabetical chronogram that means '345'.[29] Whatever the case, the local attraction for this elite community of Jewish Christians, henceforth called Malankara Nazaranis, lay in their energetic and enterprising aptitude for doing business. Those who had once prospered in Mesopotamia prospered in India, and were seen as generating local prosperity wherever they settled; their presence was courted and coveted by local rulers. Hardly a decade after the arrival of Thomas Kināyi, Theophilus the Indian, actually a native of the Maldive Islands, was sent on a mission to southern Arabia, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, and India by the Roman Emperor Constantius. The historian who wrote of this mission, an Arian by the name of Philostorgius, was described in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius. In this work, he expressed disgust at the way Christians of India worshiped, in violation of the 'Apostolic Constitutions' of fourth-century Syria which required that 'all people should *stand* in perfect stillness' whenever the Gospel was read in public.[30] Indian Christians remained 'in a sitting position and did other things that were repugnant to divine law'.[31] Some critical scholars, such as

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[28] Ibid. 172. There is not a shred of evidence, from these sources, that these were Ebionites.

[29] Kollaparambil, *Babylonian Origin*, 89–98: 'III. The Year of the Southists' Immigration'.

[30] Samuel H. Moffatt, *The History of Christianity in Asia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 267.

[31] *History of the Church by Sozomen and Philostorgius* (London: Henry G. Bohn [Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library, 1855), 445. *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen: Comprising a History of the Church from A.D. 324 to A.D. 440. Translated from the Greek with a memoir of the author.* Also, *Epitome of the Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius compiled by Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, trans. Edward Walford.

Alphonse Mingana, T. K. Joseph, and A. E. Medlycott, have felt that, at the very least, this document serves to show that congregations of faithful Christians then resident in India worshipped God in the name of Christ and read the Gospel regularly under the ministry of local pastors. This, quite clearly, was a culturally indigenous community in that this was not only culturally parochial in form but also well integrated into local cultures of India. It was also a community very much out of touch with the Graeco-Roman world.[32] Theophilus claimed that he had remedied the repugnant behaviour of Indian Christians so as to confirm 'the dogma of the Church'. Mingana, in his commentary, indicates that the Christians found by Theophilus in India may have been akin to Christians of Socotra and that they 'made use of the Syriac language in their church services'.[33]

As also already mentioned, references to the Christians of Malabar and Sri Lanka were made by 'Cosmas the India Traveller' (Cosmas Indikopleustes). This merchant or monk from Alexandria also recorded what he had found on voyages of exploration in his *Christian Topography* (from the Greek: *Topographia Christiana*, circa 535–6):

The church, far from being destroyed, is multiplying, the whole world filled with the doctrine of Christ, and the Gospel is being proclaimed in the whole world. This I have seen with my own eyes in many places, and have heard narrated by others . . . Even in the Island of Taprobane [Sri Lanka] in Inner India, where also the Indian sea is, there is a church of Christians, clergy and believers . . . The same is true in the place called Male [Malabar], where the pepper grows, and the place called Kaliana, and there is a bishop appointed from Persia. (Book III, ch. 64)

This is a Great Island in the ocean situated in the Indian Sea. By the Indians it is called Silendipa, among the Greeks Taprobane. There the jacinth stone is found. It lies beyond the country where the pepper grows . . . The same island has a church of Persian Christians who are resident in that country, and a priest sent from Persia, and a deacon, and all that is required for conducting the worship of the church. The natives and their kings are [quite another kind of people, pagan, or heathen (from ἀλλόφυλοι)]. (Book XI, ch. 130)[34]

[32] Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity*, 26–7; Joseph, *Malabar Christians*, 2; Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, 186–202, 186–7.

[33] Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity*, 27. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 68; and Moffatt, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 267.

[34] J. W. McGrindle, *Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1907), 118–29; and/or *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, trans. and ed. O. E. Winstedt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909). Also quoted, with commentary, by Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: Beginnings to 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 36–7; Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity*, 30–1; Joseph, *Malabar Christians*, 1–2; S. G. Pothan, *Syrian Christians of Kerala* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 27.

The Refugees from Dar-al-Islam

Meanwhile, to the west of India, the gap generated by steady processes of alienation—between the Church of the East and Churches of the West, both Catholic and Orthodox—continued to widen. This became an almost unbridgeable chasm after the year 632, with the rise and expansion of Islam. Regimes claiming submission to *dar-al-Islam* provoked spasmodic waves of Christian refugees fleeing from persecution across the Arabian Sea. Copper-plate inscriptions (*ollas* or *sasanams*) indicate that these new-comers also were highly esteemed for the wealth that they generated.[35] One set of late eighth-century copper plates (*ollas* or *sasanam*s) in Quilon indicates that a grant was given by a king named Veera Raghavan Chak-ravarti to a leading (Christian) merchant of Kodungallur (Cranganore, or ancient Muziris) named Iravi Kortthan (perhaps *Katthanar*, meaning 'pas-tor' or 'priest'). Another set of copper plates (*ollas* or *sasanams*), known as the *Tarisapalli* (Persian Christian) plates of Quilon, is still preserved in Thiruvalla and in Kottayam.[36] This shows that extensive privileges, in land holdings and high status, were bestowed in the time of Perumal Sthani Ravi Gupta. These were given by the subordinate Ayyan Adikkal, Raja Rama of Venadu, to Marwan Saphir Isho (Sabr'isho), lauding him as 'Restorer of the City' (*nagaram*). These privileges, in the year 825 and confirmed again by Sthani Ravi, the Ayyan of Venād in 849 and 880, acknowledged the aristocratic status and perquisites of the *Tarisapalli* (Per-sian Christian community) in relation to members of the no less noble status of *Anjunānnam* (Jewish trade guilds) and the *Mānigrāmmam* (members of trade guilds, many of whom were also Christians or Jews)—all of whom were co-holders of power within the *nagaram*.[37] Lands granted were demarcated in the traditional manner, 'by letting a female elephant roam free' to mark the territory that was desired.[38] Autonomous authority, known as the 'seventy-two privileges', included the enjoyment of full local self-government, armed self-protection by a militia of 600 Christian warriors, exemption from corvée labour, custody of weights and measures, special bride-price privileges, and right to receive hereditary services from various lower-level communities, such as crop cultivators (*vellalars*), oil-producers (*vaniyars*), washermen (*vannars*), toddy-tappers (*ilavars*),

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[35] See photocopies and hand drawings of these two sets in S. G. Pothan, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), between pp. 32 and 33, with translations in appendices I and II, pp. 102–5.

[36] *Travancore Archaeological Reports, Series II* (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1920), 75–80. The first set of plates was issued in the fifth regnal year of Sthani Ravi, or the year 849.

[37] Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India*, 166–9.

[38] Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 75.

artisans and carpenters (*tachars*), and menials. Even Christians from polluting castes were to be allowed to enter the Quilon fortress.[39]

During these same years, records of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 883 contain the astonishing words: 'The same year Sigehelm and Aethelstan took to Rome, and also to St Thomas and St Bartholomew in India, the alms that the [King] Alfred had promised to send thither.'[40] How knowledge could have reached pre-1066 Conquest England is an intriguing question about which one can only speculate. Perhaps some late version of the *Acts of Thomas* that had somehow become linked to Gregory of Tours (*c*. CE 590) might have reached the pious and upright ruler across the Channel. In light of other known merchant or pilgrim adventurers who travelled incredibly long distances during those centuries, such an event is not implausible.[41]

Some critics have questioned whether the concept 'India' as it is found in these early sources is really the same as the India that we know. They see it as an indefinite or vague geographical expression that has also been applied to Abyssinia (or Ethiopia), eastern Arabia, or Persia, and that it cannot be definitively identified with what we know as 'India'. Europeans, after all, were 'ignorant' about India in those days, especially after Islam had thrown up a barrier between India and the West. Such critiques often betray an ignorance of the history of those times. Arabs and Greeks, as well as Syrian Christians, had long maintained active contacts with India, both by land and sea. Muziris, close to what later became known as Cranganore and in proximity to Malankara, had remained a thriving entrepôt of overseas commerce, both in the west (Africa and Persia) and with the seaports further to the east.[42]

Quite clearly, in processes that stretched over a course of more than a thousand years, if not longer, different Christian communities evolved within what was a highly segmented society in Malabar. From the outset, these seem to have been, for the most part, an aristocratic and indigenous elite. Hindu in culture, Christian in faith, and Persian or Syrian (Orthodox) in doctrine, ecclesiology, and ritual, these Christians, at least some of whom were a compact Jewish Christian community, gradually evolved into what constituted a complex of high-caste communities whose occupational position, ritual purity, and social ranking, as merchant traders and merchant warriors—sometimes even as local rulers—became ever more firmly fixed and well grounded. Within a Brahmanically framed social order (*varnāshramadharma*) of a 'four-class' or 'four-colour' (*chaturvarniya*)

[39] Joseph, *Malabar Christians*, 33–7. Also see Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India*, 166–9; Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 74–5.

[40] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. and ed. Anne Savage (New York: St Martin's/Marek, 1983), 97.

[41] Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, 44.

[42] P. J. Thomas, 'Was the Apostle Thomas in South India?', in Hosten (ed.), *Antiquities from San Thomé and Mylapore*, p. x.

system, most Thomas Christians seem to have been categorized as falling somewhere between the Kshatriya and Vaishya strata of castes. Christian cultures—not all being of the same caste (*jāti*) or lineage (*vamsha*)—were far from uniform in quality and texture. Yet all Christians possessed features which were distinctly native to the land, or 'Hindu' in the original sense of that term.

In time, Jewish Christians of the most exclusive communities descended from settlers who accompanied Knayil Thomma (*Kanāyi*) became known as 'Southists' (*Tekkumbhāgar*). With their claims to royal descent and purer blood, traced back to King David, they more carefully preserved their own lineages and more strictly avoided ritual pollution. They distinguished between themselves and 'Northists' (*Vatakkumbhāgar*). The 'Northists', on the other hand, claimed direct descent from the very oldest Christians of the country, those who had been won to Christ by the Apostle Thomas himself. They had already long inhabited northern parts of Kodungallur. They had been there even before various waves of newcomers had arrived from the Babylonian or Mesopotamian provinces of Sassanian Persia. Conflicts between these two endogamous wings of the Thomas Christian community, on matters both small and large, became chronic. Nevertheless, both groups constructed churches in close proximity to each other in such places as Kaduthuruthi and Kottayam.[43]

'Southists' in particular, if not other Thomas Christians, shared a world of common culture and inhabited a common space with other high-born peoples (castes or *jātis*). Their men wore tonsures, with shaven heads having tufts of hair comparable to tonsures worn by certain monks in the West. As Malankara Nazaranis, their positions seem to have paralleled those of the Nayars—in the nature of special relations with Brahmans and with each other. Their places of dwelling were referred to as *tharavād* and their rituals for removing pollution, their uses of *ghee* and *ghur*, and their ways of handling food and drink and utensils, were very similar. Even in matters of interdining and intermarriage, as also in disposal of pollution connected to dead bodies (*pulakuli*), rituals of Nayars and these Thomas (or Syrian) Christians became linked. A new husband, for example, tied a *thāli* around his bride's neck (albeit with a cross attached to it), and performed a very similar kind of traditional ceremonial for investiture of the 'marriage cloth'. Even in the celebration of *Onam* and *Vishu*, at harvest and new year festivals, elite communities functioned within a common cultural framework.

Indeed, as wealthy merchant bankers and traders whose transactions and travels called for armed protection by skilled warriors, the same kind of

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[43] Kollaparambil, *Babylonian Origin*. Of course, this interpretation is only one of several descriptive explanations for distinctions between the two communities.

training in martial sciences (*kalāri-pāyat*) was given to boys of both Nayar and Christian communities. Training in such disciplines, commencing when boys were aged 8 and continuing until they were 25, was given by *guru* fencing masters known as *panikkars*. According to the *Villiarvattom Pāna*, the power of Malankara Nazaranis who scattered along the Malabar coast reached so far that, at one time, they were able to form their own 'little kingdom'. This realm, stretching intermittently north and south along the coast, with its capital at Mahadevapattanam ('Port of the Great God', sometimes spelled Mogoderpatnam) on the island of Chennamangalam, seems later to have moved to Udayamperur so as to avoid Arab depredations. Udayamperur, with its Great Church as a central place of worship, had been constructed, according to Thomas Christian tradition, by the Villiarvattam Raja circa 510. This 'little kingdom' seems to have survived until well after the coming of the Portuguese in 1498. Only after receiving what, in their view, turned out to be duplicitous or insincere promises of help in their perpetual struggles to defend themselves from Arabs, did the Malankara Christians finally see themselves betrayed and then partially conquered by the Raja of Cochin. Even so, the fact remains that these Thomas Christian forces, as such, were never completely subdued by force of arms.

Conclusion

Canonical belief in the significance of the arrival and survival of Thomas Christians from ancient times onwards is extremely important for understanding the entire history of Christianity in India. While much data has been uncovered and while there may yet be more that is continuously being sifted, the historicity of apostolic origins rests upon conjectural or uncertain evidence. Yet, large measures of circumstantial and corroborative evidences are such that the plausibility, if not possibility, of historicity cannot be entirely or lightly dismissed. An attempt has been made, within these pages, to show that, along with all other histories of India from ancient times to the present, what starts as a tiny and thin trickle of traditions was increasingly reinforced by more and more concrete and durable kinds of architectural, epigraphic, and numismatic data and that this stream, increasingly strengthened by oral traditions and literary texts, becomes broader and broader until, like the mingling convergences of the numerous branches of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra that criss-cross and diverge in the bewildering variety of streams to form that labyrinthine maze known as the Sundarbans, they merge into an ocean of probabilities.

The tradition that Thomas the Apostle came and worked and died in India is as old and as deeply rooted in India as many of the earliest Christian traditions. That this tradition is accepted as canonical cannot be denied.

While, despite manifold, parallel, and venerable sources, there is not enough evidence to compel unqualified acceptance, neither are there sufficient grounds, due to the rich array of extremely complex and difficult strands of circumstantial evidence, to dismiss outright or disprove the historicity of this tradition. Some accretions of evidence cannot be accepted as having any claim to historical validity. But other elements, some of much earlier origin, handed down through known writers going back to patristic and apostolic times, are reliable. Fanciful legends of later centuries that cluster around these earlier elements do not nullify or even weaken the core of the original tradition. An impartial study of understandings drawn from this tradition can be viewed on the same level as many of the generally accepted facts about ancient India and about ancient Christianity elsewhere.

Thus, it seems certain that there were well-established communities of Christians in South India no later than the third and fourth centuries, and perhaps much earlier. That at least some communities were of foreign origin and that they were led by pastors and bishops that used Syriac as their language of learning and liturgy is also clear. That these immigrant new-comers settled in proximity to pre-existing Christian communities is no less clear. Some of the Christians from the earliest times not only became identified with the imperial Perumals of Malabar (aka Kerala) but also with Pandiyan and Chola kingdoms, and especially with the Pallava regime centred near Mylapore (Mailapur). That these earliest Christians tried to spread their faith to the non-Christians among whom they lived is not at all clear. But, in light of facts known and not known, millions of Thomas Christians remain certain that their founder was none other than the Apostle himself. For them, this is an established article of faith—a part of their own canon from which there can be no deviation.

Thus, as we shall see in the chapters that follow, from what occurred in later centuries, Thomas Christians continued to represent the earliest and strongest expressions of indigenous Christianity to be found anywhere in the continent. Both in ideological and in institutional forms, these Christians gradually became separated by historical circumstances into more and more distinct communities, all of which continued to thrive. Each of these separate Thomas Christian communities continues to lay claim to being inheritors of the apostolic tradition of St Thomas as the historic basis, both for their origins and for their doctrinal and ecclesiastical authority.

Photographs of the following Thomas Christian churches can be found in the plate section:
Old St Thomas Cathedral Palai 'Valia Pally', founded AD 1004. Plates 1 and 2.
St Mary's Church and St Augustine's Church, Ramapuram, Kottayam. Plate 6.
Mattanchery Church Kochi (Cochin) town in (16th century). Plate 3.

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PFARANGI CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS AND
PADROADO CHRISTENDOM

By the time of the Islamic Hejra in AD 622, the Gospel in India was hardly new. India's Christian communities were already many centuries old. The Thomas Tradition—the belief that the Apostle brought the Gospel to India in AD 52 and that he suffered martyrdom near what is now Mylapore (Mailapur)—had long since acquired and retained the canonical status it now holds. Yet, when viewed in heuristic terms, one can perhaps already discern what seems, at least to an observer from afar, to be a pattern of apparent changelessness. Thereafter, between fresh if spasmodic infusions of immigrant refugees from lands under the sway of *dar-ul-Islam*, there were periods of what seem like dormancy and quiescence, if not of outright hibernation. This pattern of apparent stagnancy may well be due to the paucity of evidence to the contrary. More data and clearer understandings about what might have transpired between each fresh infusion of influential and wealthy Christian immigrant settlers, especially those who retained formal links to the ecclesiastical systems of Mesopotamia (East Syria), are needed. Arrivals of refugees fleeing from oppression and persecution continued intermittently for nearly a thousand years. In due course, each new group seems to have all but lost contact with the Orthodox communions of Byzantium and Rome further to the West. Except for fresh infusions of clergy from Mesopotamia, Christians in India also do not even seem to have played any larger part within the Church of the East.

The Missionaries of Medieval Europe

Even so, Christianity in the world outside Europe had already expanded eastward in considerable strength long before the Great Councils began to codify the institutions of Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christianity. Developments in the West, moreover, hardly seem to have influenced, or even touched, forms of Eastern Christianity that were already well established. It is important not to forget that, by the time that 'Christendom' in

Europe was becoming established, this very ascendancy was already beginning to retreat—and this, in some measure, due to influences from the non-Western world. Thus, as in our own day the future of Christians in the world now seems to lie more and more in Asia and Africa, as well as Latin America, the stereotype of 'Christianity' as an exclusively Western or 'colonial' imposition upon the world—a view that is constantly being resurrected and repeated, again and again as if it were a sacred *mantra*—needs to be revised.

For many reasons, the history of Christianity in India cannot be understood without taking into consideration a huge void. For over 600, perhaps even 1,000 years, Christians of the West were so completely cut off from Christians of the East that, through much of that time, a curtain of darkness and incomprehension descended between these two worlds. Significantly, just as most accounts about India's Christians during the first six centuries of the Christian era had come to the West through the agency of Christians from Egypt and Mesopotamia, accounts from Christians in these countries after 622 all but disappeared. Perhaps, considering that the Patriarchs of Antioch and Babylon soon no longer resided in those cities but in places of refuge located in the upper Tigris, few if any records about their relationships with bishoprics in India seem to have survived. Darkness and ignorance about Christians descended within lands where *dar-ul-Islam* held sway, even though populations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine remained predominantly Christian during centuries before the crusades. Perhaps Christians in those lands were not so free; and perhaps they were obliged to be much more circumspect. Their very presence under *dar-ul-Islam*, and under Islamic institutions, may have stifled missionary efforts by subject Christian communities. Whatever the case, during the centuries that followed the rise of Islam in lands of the Fertile Crescent, reports about Christians in India became more meagre and came mainly from European mendicants, missionaries, or merchants.

Even so, all one can learn from reports of Europeans who managed to visit Christians in India is that Christians were still there and that the centres of their worship were much the same as they had been during previous centuries. Over a period from the Hejra of 622 to the coming of Vasco da Gama in 1498, only four visits to Christians of India are noteworthy. These begin with the previously mentioned 883 report, recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, about two monks, or bishops, named Sigehelm and Aethelstan, who were sent by King Alfred and who told of their visit to the tomb of St Thomas at Mylapore (Mailapur). Next, there is the record of John of Monte Corvino. A Franciscan missionary, en route to the Great Khan in Cambalec (as Beijing was then known) as a papal emissary, he visited

Christians of Malabar in 1293. His efforts would be so successful that he became China's first Catholic Archbishop (*c.*1307). After reaching China, he reported: 'I remained in the country of India, wherein stands the church of St. Thomas the Apostle, for thirteen months, and I baptized in different places about one hundred persons. The companion of my journey was Friar Nicholas of Pistois of the Order of Preachers, who died there and was buried in the church.'[1] At approximately the same time, between 1292 and 1295, Marco Polo also visited Mylapore. After then travelling down to Kaniya Kumari (Cape Comorin) and visiting Christians and Jews in Quilon (which he spelled 'Coilum') he continued on his journey home to Italy. A whole chapter of his *Travels* is devoted to a discussion about 'the place where lieth the body of St. Thomas the Apostle, and the miracles thereof'.[2] Christian pilgrims would gather red earth from the place where the Apostle had been killed for use in curing the sick. In 1321–3, some thirty years after Marco Polo, a Dominican monk named Jordanus Catalini arrived at Thāna, near what is now Mumbai. In a work he entitled *Mirabilia descripta*,[3] he reported recent martyrdoms of four friars, described people who called themselves Christians, and baptized 300 'idolaters and Saracens'. Only two years later, in 1325, Friar Odoric wrote about Palm Sunday services he had attended in Quilon. He found that 'all the world's pepper [that] was being produced and shipped' to other countries came from Quilon. He gave colourful and graphic accounts of many things, included a reference to the same martyrdoms in Thāna that had been described by Jordanus. About the Christians he found at the place where 'the blessed Thomas the Apostle' was buried, he observed: 'His church is filled with idols, and beside it are fifteen houses of the Nestorians, that is to say Christians but vile and pestilent heretics.'[4] A quarter-century later, in 1349, a Franciscan friar named John de Marignolli, also on his way back to Rome from the Great Khan, stopped in Quilon ('Columbum'), and also reported that 'the whole world's pepper' was produced and controlled by 'Christians of St. Thomas' and that he had been 'carried on the shoulders of their chiefs in a litter [or palanquin] like Solomon'.[5] Finally, in 1440, only a half-century before the arrival of Vasco da Gama, Nicolo de Conti, a Venetian who had lived for twenty-five years in Damascus and become

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[1] Col. Sir Henry Yule (trans. and ed.), *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1913–16), iii. 45.

[2] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, trans. Colonel Sir Henry Yule, rev. Henri Cordier (London: J. Murray, 1903), ii. 331–75.

[3] *Mirabilia descripta: The Wonders of the East*, trans. and ed. Colonel Henry Yule (London: For the Hakluyt Society, 1863), pp. vii, xiv–xvii, 23.

[4] In *Cathay and the Way Thither*, ii. 141–2 (126 ff.).

[5] Ibid. iii. 216–18 [177–268].

a Muslim, did penance after returning home by relating his travels. He also wrote about the people who worshipped 'where the body of St. Thomas lies honourably buried in a large and beautiful church' and about a congregation of over a thousand Nestorians who identified themselves with the Apostle.[6]

The Pfarangi *Fleets of Portugal*

The term *Farangi* or *Parangi* or *Pfarangi* (depending upon whether one transliterates the word from Perso-Arabic into Urdu or Tamil or some blend thereof) had been in use throughout the East for many centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese. Coming from the word 'Frank', perhaps first used during struggles between Christians and Muslims in Spain and Palestine, it had become the standard designation for 'Europeans'. Behind the coming of *Pfarangi* to India lay nearly 800 years of Islamic rule and centuries of struggles against *dar-al-Islam* in al-Andalus. Ancestors of inhabitants within the Iberian Peninsula who created the kingdoms of Portugal and Castile and had roots stretching back to late Roman times had a deep consciousness of catastrophe. Searing memories of defeat when Arab armies had overrun their lands in 711 and centuries of struggle thereafter were etched into their collective sense of identity. Muslims, so few in number when they first came from the Levant and Maghreb, had succeeded in imposing their own kind of hegemony (*dar-al-Islam*) upon the peoples of al-Andalus. Painful experiences—of acculturation and conversion and resistance to Islam—had never been forgotten. Over the centuries thereafter, from mountain redoubts in the north, their resistance had slowly grown until, at last, the balance of power had been reversed. Between the years 1064 and 1250, nearly 80 per cent of the peninsula had been reoccupied by the forces of Christendom. Re-Christianization after the *Reconquista* had led, in turn, to crusades to take back what remained of the Iberian Peninsula. After the Caliphate of Cordoba had collapsed and rule over domains (*comrades*, or counties) of Coimbra and *Portucale* had been consolidated, the father of Dom Henrique (1105–85) had become the founder-king of Portugal. But neither princes nor people of what became Portugal could forget the long struggle.[7]

The result was a mentality of militancy—an attitude of implacable and perpetual war against 'Moorish' aggression. Despite ups and downs, harsh trials, and times of misery, peoples and prelates had managed to survive the

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[6] R. H. Major (trans. and ed.), *India in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857), ii. 7.

[7] Sanjay Subramaniam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (London: Longman, 1993), 30–1.

split that long divided those who became free from those who still remained subject to Muslim rule. Dark, eschatological visions were shared by Christians on both sides of the frontier who had repeatedly had to face traumas of Muslim attacks which sharpened their animus against Islam. Such feelings remained long after the great *Reconquista* and final collapse of Islamic rule. In fostering such mentalities among Iberian peoples, the role of the Church was pivotal. The result had been a special form of Christendom.[8] No proper understanding of the story of *Pfarangi* Christians within the Indian continent as this unfolded can ignore these memories. Such memories may have fuelled the impetus of the drive to bypass the Islamic world and search for a different sea route to India. The fall of Granada, not far from Lisbon, had occurred during the very years that these explorations were moving forward. While different Portuguese rulers turned their eyes to the sea—both for security and prosperity[9]—they did not forget their larger, spiritual mission—the spirit that had served them so well during centuries of struggle against Islam.

As early as the reign of Dom Ferdinand I (1367–83), shipbuilding and maritime exploration had been declared the royal quest of the Portuguese realm. That the son of John I (1385–1433), the Infante Dom Henrique (1433–60), better known by modern historians as 'Prince Henry the Navigator', should then have dedicated himself to exploring the oceans, tides, and routes was hardly strange.[10] As he recruited renowned astronomers, cartographers, and shipwrights, he envisioned reaching Asia by sailing south around the tip of Africa. Years of experimentation enabled the development of better and bigger and stronger ships, stout vessels such as the caravel and galleon, that could not only tack better against the wind but could fire heavier cannon without falling apart from shock and vibration. Newer instruments and charts helped to locate global positions. Trips of exploration moved further and further down the western coasts of Africa, leaving fortified stations behind them. The fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, coming after incessant struggle (*jihads* and crusades) between Christendom and *dar-ul-Islam*, brought a heightened sense of urgency. And when Turkish rulers controlling the western ends of the Silk Road and the spice routes through the Levant into the eastern Mediterranean sharply increased customs duties on goods moving from India, China, and other lands of Asia, this sense of urgency increased.

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[8] Stanley G. Payne, *Spanish Catholicism: An Historical Overview* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), especially 3–24, provides a succinct summary of this subject.

[9] C. R. [Charles Ralph] Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415–1825*: A Succinct Survey (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1961, 1965).

[10] F. C. Danvers, *The Portuguese in India: A History of the Rise and Decline of their Eastern Empire* (London: Cass, 1966), 42 ff.

When Bartholomew Diaz finally rounded or 'doubled' the Cape of Storms at the southern tip of Africa, and realized that the way into the Indian Ocean lay open to European ships, he renamed the cape the Cape of Good Hope. Manuel I fully supported the voyage that would then bring Dom Vasco da Gama to India. This event set in motion a process that would soon make all the oceans of the world into highways to fame, fortune, and power. At a blow, Europeans had leap-frogged over and bypassed the older civilizations of the ancient Near East. Thereafter, just as Arabs and Turks had used deserts and steppes for their caravans, travelling from oasis to oasis, so now Europeans would use the seas and oceans of the world for their convoys, setting up trading stations at strategic towns along the coastlines of every continent. Peoples and princes of India had no way of anticipating that what had come upon them from the sea was so very different from what had come from the sea in earlier times.

Vasco da Gama's small fleet of four ships, piloted by a Malabar 'Christian'[11] who had been picked up at Melinda on the east coast of Africa, reached Calicut on Sunday, 20 May 1498. The next day, a convert-exile (*degredado*) was sent ashore to reconnoitre. Finding 'two Moors of Tunis' who spoke Castelian and Genoese and asked what brought *Pfarangi* ships so far, he is reported to have replied, 'We come to seek Christians and spices.'[12] Initial relations between the Captain-Major and the Samudri-Raja (literally, 'King of the Sea') were cautious but courteous. But when they met face to face, diplomatic protocols failed, causing misunderstandings on both sides. Such a small fleet so far away from its homeland hardly seemed much of a threat. At least one European mistook temples for churches: 'This city of Calicut is [comprised] of Christians, who are men, and some of them go about with large beards, and long hair on the head, and others have shaven heads . . . And they have topknots on their crowns, as a sign that they are Christians, and moustaches with their beards. And they have their ears pierced, and in the holes wear much gold, and they walk about naked up to the waist, and below they wear certain delicate cotton-cloths. And those who go about dressed like this are the most honoured folk.'[13] When the ships sailed after a three-month stay, their holds were full of spices.

[11] Sanjay Subramaniam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 121–2. The identity of this pilot has evoked controversy. Some hold that this pilot was a 'Moor of Guzerate' (Gujarat), and perhaps none other than Ibn Masjid, the most celebrated Arab navigator of the age.

[12] Ibid. 129; this famous conversation, found in most standard works, Subramaniam has traced (pp. 81–3) to a text by Alvaro Velho that was edited and published by Portuguese scholar Abel Fontoura da Costa, *Reteiro da primeira viagem de Vasco da Gama (1497–1499) por Alvaro Velho I* (Lisbon, 1940).

[13] Subramaniam, *Career and Legend*, 130. It seems clear, from these earliest accounts, that Europeans could not have told the difference between those who were Christians and those who were not, since all local gentry dressed alike and looked somewhat similar.

The next fleet reached Calicut in 1500. It consisted of thirteen ships and a thousand men under the command of Dom Pedro Alvarez Cabral. Among those on board were nineteen missionaries, more than half of them Franciscans. But relations on shore quickly deteriorated. The old Samudri Raja having died, his young and vigorous successor kept a close eye on affairs. He came down to the shore to meet the newcomers fully arrayed in rich finery. Fine gifts were given to him; and, in return, a large house on the seafront was provided for storing trade goods. But Muslim merchants quickly stirred up fears and resentments. On 16 December, the house was attacked. Fifty-four men were killed and valuable goods were destroyed. When no explanation came from the Samudri Raja and when Arab ships in the port opened fire, Cabral's forces retaliated—capturing fifteen ships and bombarding the town. When this incident became known to the rulers of Cochin and Cannanore, they sought to exploit it to their advantage. The Cochin Raja, Uni Goda Varma, and the Raja of Cannanore quickly invited the *Pfarangi* ships to their ports and sold all the spices needed to fill the ships. After yet another sharp encounter with vastly larger numbers of 'Moorish' merchant warriors, which served as a reminder of the ongoing struggle between Christendom and *dar-ul-Islam*,[14] the European fleet sailed for Lisbon. Relations with the Samudri Raja (aka Zamorin) and his successors, as with all Arab merchants and Muslim *Māppilas* along the coast, never recovered from these initial encounters.

Meanwhile, on shore, four Syrian Christian bishops (*metrans*) had closely observed these happenings. The detailed report that they sent to the Catholicos of the East is a remarkable document.[15] Written in Syriac by Mar Jacob on behalf of himself and Mar Thomas, Mar Denha, and Mar Jaballaha, all four having been sent from Mesopotamia to provide clerical support for local Christians, it gave a vivid eyewitness account. Indicating that the 30,000 Christian families under their care were prospering 'in every respect', that they were building new churches and living in peace, and that the monastery of St Thomas the Apostle, some twenty-five days' journey away on the shores of the sea near a town called 'Mailapur', was being restored, Mar Jacob then went on to describe what had transpired after the

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[14] Ibid. 128–45. Also: Michael N. Pearson, *The Portuguese in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Charles R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 34 ff.

[15] Subramaniam, *Career and Legend*, 218–19—which refers to Georg Schurhammer, 'Three Letters of Mar Jacob, Bishop of Malabar, 1503–1550', in Laszlo Silas (ed.), *Orientalia* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1963), 335–6; and also Thomaz, 'A Carta que mandaram os Padres', the original Syriac text of which is located in the Vatican Library, Codex. Vatic. Fondo Siriasco 204, fls. 154v–60.

arrival of *Pfarangi* ships in Calicut, Cochin, and Cannanore.[16] These *Pfarangi* Christians, having 'learned the sea route' to India, had taken only six months to make their second voyage to Calicut with much larger and more powerful ships. Mar Jacob reported that multitudes of 'Ishmailites' (Muslims) who had become 'enraged and maddened against these Christians [and had] accused them before the pagan ruler, uttering lies concerning them', had provoked the attack. Warned that his country would be taken from him by the *Pfarangis*, the Samudri Raja had become so alarmed that, acting 'like a madman', he had allowed the *Pfarangi* house on the waterfront to be destroyed, so that over seventy Christians had been killed, including 'five pious priests who were with them, because they do not travel anywhere without priests'.[17] But then, after many more *Pfarangi* ships had arrived in the harbour, the entire town and harbour had been subjected to heavy bombardment with considerable loss of life. The *Pfarangis* had then established friendly relations with the rulers in Cannanore and Cochin, who had helped them to fend off further attacks from Calicut. These other local rulers had supplied the *Pfarangis* with 1,400 *tagars* of pepper (equivalent to 2,800,000 kilograms). But before their fleet had sailed for their own country, a delegation of Indian Christians had gone to the *Pfarangis* in order to become better acquainted. In the words of the Syrian bishop (*metran*):

[We] went to them and told them that we were Christians, and told us our story. They were pleased with us and gave us beautiful garments, with twenty drachmas of gold; for the sake of Christ, they honoured in an extraordinary way our state of being strangers. We remained with them two and a half months, and they ordered us one day to say mass . . . at which they were greatly pleased with us. After that we left them and went to our Christians, who were eight days distant . . . Their King is Immanuel. May Emmanuel protect them![18]

Two years later, in November 1502, not long after the arrival from Lisbon of the Captain-Major, Admiral Vasco da Gama, another delegation of Indian Christian leaders, also led by Mar Jacob, the *Metran* of Ankamāli, went to meet him in Cochin.[19] Indicating that they represented Christians of the land, they proposed a formal alliance. This, they indicated, would be based upon common faith as Christians and upon a need for mutual benefit and protection. In token of this alliance, they ceremonially presented the Captain-Major with a highly ornate red staff, richly inlaid, with silver bands

[16] Alphonse Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1926), reprinted from *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 10: 2 (July 1926), 37–42, took these from Latin translations made by J. S. Assemani, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementini Vaticana* (Rome, 1719–28), iii. 590 ff.

[17] Ibid. 41.

[18] Ibid. 41 (pp. 37–42).   [19] Subramaniam, *Career and Legend*, 227–8.

on its ends and three silver bells on its top. Da Gama and his entourage seem to have mistaken the full import of this gift. Taking it as a sceptre being offered in token of submission, and perhaps failing to understand what 'gifting' might represent within Indian culture—where 'gifts', rather than serving as tokens of submission, symbolized superiority—the Portuguese were only too happy to accept.

It took a while for the Portuguese to discover the contours of the Christian community of Malabar with whom they were dealing. This community at that time seems to have occupied some sixty towns along the coast, stretching from Mangalore in the north to Quilon (aka Kollam) in the south, with most of them located within the territory of Cochin or of northern Travancore. They had at one time rendered homage to their own ruler, a raja with the family name of Villiyarvattam (spelled 'Beliarte' by the Portuguese writer) whose capital had been located at Udayamperur (not far across an inland lagoon from Cochin).[20] In the confusion following the demise (or disappearance) of the last great Cheruman Perumal, this small Christian kingdom had survived and flourished for many centuries, until its own royal lineage had died out for lack of legitimate heirs. As a consequence, the crown of the Christian royal family had lapsed, and the entire realm had become subject to the non-Christian rajas of Cochin and Travancore. Only the great Church of Udayamperur had remained to remind Christians of their once glorious past.

The Portuguese soon discovered that, in more recent years, Christians of Malabar had found themselves increasingly at bay and facing increased dangers. Muslim forces subject to the Samudri Raja of Calicut and non-Muslim forces subject to the Raja of Cochin and other lesser rajas were making ever more predatory demands. Yet, as Gouvea would later note in his *Jornado*, Christians still had the ability to muster 50,000 skilled gunmen. 'The main strength of the raja', he wrote, 'consists in the Christians of St. Thomas. They are fine gunmen and so good shots that they rarely miss fire, and from an early age they are brought up gun-in-hand and thus turn out to be splendid hunters.'[21] Moreover, they all went about with swords and shields, or guns and lances which they only left at home when going to church. Nevertheless, no longer quite strong enough to retain a sufficient or lasting security among many dozens of local rajas scattered up and down the

[20] Ibid. 179–80; C. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual* (Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1911), 96; A. Mathias Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob, 1498–1552* (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1967), 161–5.

[21] Leslie Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 15 (13–15). Michael Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar . . .* (London: Smith & Wilford, 1694), book I, chs. 15, 19.

Malabar and Konkan coasts, Thomas Christian notables wanted to obtain better terms from their 'Christian brothers' from the West. For the Portuguese this alliance with local Christian merchant warriors offered the prospect of gaining control over much of the spice trade, which was largely in Christian hands—thereby helping them to procure enough produce to fill the cargo holds of fleets that they wanted to depart annually for Europe. It also offered them an opportunity, as we shall see, to vastly increase the sway of a peculiarly Iberian form of Christendom.

As a consequence, a formal alliance was forged in 1503. The Chaldean Catholicos of the East (or Patriarch of Babylon) and the *Pfarangi* Admiral of Portugal established a harmonious relationship that lasted, with only minor interruptions, for half a century. Indeed, Mar Jacob, *Metran* of Ankamāli from 1503 to 1550, reaffirmed the commitment of his people to the common cause in 1523, an action that was ratified by the Chaldean Catholicos of Babylon. In his letter to the Pope, reaffirming the alliance made twenty years earlier, he even agreed that, in token of cordial relations between Christian brothers, processions on ceremonial occasions—involving matters relating to public displays of the Gospel, crosses, candles and canticles, consecrations, ordinations, and sacraments before high altars of worship— could, at times, be jointly celebrated.[22]

Meanwhile, as explorers, friars, merchants, and soldiers increasingly travelled along the shorelines and penetrated more deeply into the interior, they began to uncover and to collect increasing amounts of data about the Christians of India. They also engaged in heated arguments over the nature and meaning of the masses of new information they were gathering about India's ancient Christians.

There had once been a time, they discovered, when all of Malabar (aka Kerala) had been ruled by a single imperial monarch, known as the Cheruman Perumal. But this imperial line had died out many (perhaps as many as six) centuries earlier. One legend indicated that the last Cheruman Perumal had converted to Islam and gone to Zaphar where, having taken the name Abdul Raman Samiri, he had died and been buried (AD 827) without ever returning to Kerala.[23] When no single successor had taken the place of this last monarch, a political revolution had occurred. Three regimes had emerged more powerful than all others. These, from north to south, were the Samudri Raja of Calicut, the Raja of Cochin, and the Raja of Travancore. All of these principalities, and many that were smaller, had for nearly

[22] Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India* surveys these years in detail.
[23] G. M. Rae, *The Syrian Church in India* (Edinburgh: William Blackburn & Sons, 1892), 173. Ayyar [Rao Bahadur] L. K. Anantakrishna, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* (Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1926).

two centuries acknowledged at least nominal fealty to the great 'Hindutva' suzerain monarch of Vijayanagara whose sway fell across all of peninsular India south of the Tungabhadra River.

Gradually, Indian Christians realized that the promising harmony between themselves and European Christians enjoyed during their early years together was being undermined and that this harmony could not last. The struggle that developed would last for centuries. As tensions gradually mounted, these eventually led to an outright 'conquest', if not 'capitulation', of some Thomas Christians. But what happened to Thomas Christians cannot be understood without appreciating the wider political arena and efforts by Portuguese forces to extend their domains throughout the East.

By 1510, less than a decade after Cabral's departure, Goa had fallen to *Pfarangi* forces and Alburquerque had established the *Estado da India*. To counter this enormous threat to their commerce, worried Egyptians and Venetians built and sent fleets from the Red Sea to save their precious spice trade. These fleets were destroyed. With Goa as their centre, Portuguese soldiers then took and fortified stations all around the Indian Ocean, stretching from Mozambique and Mombassa to Muscat, Mumbai, Malaka, and Macau—and many other seaports between. Within twenty years, the Portuguese monarch in Lisbon declared himself to be Lord of Navigation (and Lord of the Seas). Most Arab ships were able to continue as before, by either purchasing 'passports' or by managing to elude the patrolling squadrons of this new sea lord. But none dared to mount a serious challenge to his maritime dominion—at least for nearly a century. An occasional vessel might be lost. But the enormous profits from trade were worth the risks.

Perhaps more serious was the *Pfarangi* antipathy toward all Muslims ('Moors'), in the name of Christ. Native (Hindu) or non-Muslim rajas and their great overlord at Vijayanagara found such people both convenient and useful. *Pfarangi* soldiers, especially their cannon and technicians, were employed for fighting the militant sultanates of the Deccan. Even after Hindu defeat at the battle of Talikota (in 1565) led to the fall of Vijayanagara, there were local lords to whom mercenary *Pfarangis* could sell their swords. Thus, after a few decades of sharp and costly battles, many of the Portuguese outside Goa managed to elbow spaces for themselves in enclaves all along the coasts. Most, except those of noble birth, settled down, married local women (mostly of low caste), and became increasingly 'nativized' and Indian in their ways. From a political perspective, much within the peninsular settled back to what it had been before; and newcomers from Europe were safely locked up in their coastal stations. Only in the north, in the Indo-Gangetic plain, did the new and gigantic system of Mughal imperial dominion emerge.

The Padroado Real *of Goa*

What no Christian of India could have understood at the time was that the Christians of the West who arrived from 1503 onwards, coming in the wake of the annual fleets to India, represented something that was more than mere Christianity. What they represented, moreover, was not even merely another form of an earthly 'Christendom'. Rather, as has already been indicated, this was an especially militant form of Christendom. A legacy of dark memories and apocalyptic visions arising out of sufferings experienced during centuries of struggle against al-Andalus had produced strong convictions about drawing clear lines between good and evil. This mindset in some ways mirrored the *dar-ul-Islam* against which they had fought for so long. The earliest *Pfarangi* Christians in India were not just Catholic, nor just 'Roman' Catholic. They were profoundly Portuguese. As such they came armed with the *Padroado Real*.

The *Padroado Real*, granted by the Church of Rome to the Portuguese Crown, gave it exclusive authority to fill clerical positions within its overseas domains. Resting on a series of papal letters and bulls stretching back to 1418 and 1443, this was increased when the papal bulls of Pope Nicholas V in 1452, entitled *Dum divers us* and *Divina amore*, authorized the Portuguese monarch to invade, conquer, subdue, and subject all kingdoms and territories of unbelievers and confirmed the Crown's spiritual authority over all countries from Cape 'Bojador to the Indies' and when the bull of 1455 authorized the Portuguese Crown to establish churches, monasteries, and other places of pious usage in all countries yet to be conquered. The exact meanings of all previous bulls were further spelled out in *Inter caetera*, of 13 March 1456. This gave authority to pronounce excommunication. The whole of such jurisdiction was transferred to the military Order of Christ, an institution that was itself held by the Crown. On 21 June 1481, Sixtus IV in *Aeterna regis clementina* summed up all previous bulls with the words:

Navigation in the oceans of recent discovery is restricted to Portuguese ships. The Portuguese are true lords of lands discovered or yet to be discovered. The Portuguese may freely trade with unbelievers, even Muslims, provided they do not supply them with arms or anything of the kind. The Portuguese Crown may found churches, monasteries, and other places of religious usage . . . Spiritual Power belongs to Portugal in perpetuity.[24]

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[24] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: Beginnings to 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), i. 111–13. His texts are taken from *Die Katholische Missionen in Indien, China und Japan* (Paderborn, 1915), 37–8.

Intense competition with Spain over ecclesiastical rights within new lands being discovered resulted, one year after the voyage of Columbus, in a special appeal to Rome. Pope Alexander VI, who happened to be Spanish, issued his bull entitled *Inter caetera* (aka cetera) on 4 May 1493. This took away patronage privileges previously bestowed on Portugal and granted them to Spain.[25] The bull provoked such a storm of protest from Lisbon that, in order to avoid further conflict and minimize damage, so that both powers might enjoy enough such patronage to develop their own new domains, negotiations took place between envoys of Portugal and Spain. These led to the Treaty of Tordesillas. Dated 7 June 1494, this treaty drew a clear and arbitrary line, running from north to south 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. Henceforth everything west of this line would belong to Spain and everything to the east of this line would fall to Portugal.[26]

The Portuguese *Padroado*, in short, was a combination of privileges, rights, and duties vested in the Crown of Portugal as patron of Roman Catholic missions and ecclesiastical establishments in large parts of Africa, Asia, and Brazil. The Portuguese *Padroado Real* in the non-European world was limited only by the similar Spanish *Patronato Real* conferred on the monarchy of Castile in Spanish America and the Philippines.'[27] The rationale behind the granting of such extensive privileges to these Iberian monarchies arose from a perception that little harm or risk would come from letting these kingdoms pay for the building of new churches and chapels and monasteries, as well as new ecclesiastical structures and missionary organizations, in exchange for the privilege, in perpetuity, of appointing bishops to vacant sees and of collecting church taxes and tithes.

With this *Padroado* mandate behind them, monks and missionaries of the mendicant orders who came out to Goa were sent out along the coastlines and across the countryside in various inland parts of the continent. At the forefront of these missions were the Franciscans, nine of whom had been on the first ships, and whose influence and number grew until, in 1635, there were over 600 friars in India. While there was one Dominican on the ships that arrived in 1498, the first Dominican monastery in India (Goa) was not built until 1548. The great Dominican institution, however, would be the Inquisition of God (1560). Augustinians did not arrive until 1572, and other

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[25] Texts: 'Bull of Alexander VI: The *Inter Cetera*, Papal Bull of May 4, 1493', website: www.reformation.org/bull-of-borgia.html; 'The Bull *Inter Cetera* (Alexander VI), May 4, 1493': http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/indig-inter-caetera.html; 'The Inter Cetera, Papal Bull of May 4, 1493, by Alexander VI': www.kwabs.com/bull_of_1493.html; and 'Petition Appeal to Revoke the 1493 Papal Bull Inter Caetera': http://www.uctp.org.papalbull.htm.

[26] The full text of the treaty between Spain and Portugal, in English translation, can be seen on the website: http://www.kwabs.com/tordesillas_treaty.html.

[27] Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion*, 64–6.

mendicant orders, such as the Carmelites, Capuchins, Oratorians, and Theatines, arrived even later. By far the most important and influential of all missionaries in India, incessantly in competition and controversy with the Franciscans, and eventually becoming the spearhead of missionary activity, both within and outside of Portuguese-held enclaves and territories, would be the Society of Jesus, better known as 'Jesuits'. This society, founded in 1540, was to be represented in India by Francis Xavier, the first and most illustrious of all its missionaries. Arriving in Goa only two years after the founding of the society, he was soon joined by many others. By 1584, there were 349 Jesuit missionaries.[28] Both from Cochin, where their influence remained strong, and from Goa, the citadel of *Padroado* power in the East, members of these orders gradually occupied more and more positions—within enclaves on the western coast: at Bassein, Salsette, Mumbai, Karanja, Chaul, Daman, and Diu; and within similar enclaves on the eastern coast: at San Thome (and Mylapore), Nagapattinam, Devanamattinam, Masulipattanam,[29] and Hugli in the Sundarbans of Bengal. Within the monastic and missionary institutions that they strove to establish, they blended ideals of a ruling medieval 'Christendom' in Europe with newer ideas emanating from the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation.[30]

Pfarangi clerics and missionaries increasingly disturbed the tranquillity of older, pre-existing and ancient Christian institutions. Discovery of the existence of a strong Christian presence along the south-western shores, especially within the interior uplands—which they called the *Serra*—opened up opportunities for ecclesiastical expansion. At first gradually and then more aggressively, attempts were made to gain ecclesiastical control over all indigenous Christians. Wherever Portuguese rule became established, in such enclaves as Goa, Daman, Diu, and Mumbai, the more militant of the European clerics engaged in aggressive actions. These actions certainly, in our day, would be described as 'colonialistic' in character—in the current sense of the term. These actions, at the same time, brought increasing resistance from indigenous institutions. Some Thomas Christians consistently found ways to subvert or undermine colonial domination, trying to mitigate, if not to wholly negate, efforts of the *Pfarangi* missionaries.

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[28] Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, ii: *From the Middle of the Sixteenth Century to the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1982), 5–8.

[29] Stephen Jeyaseela, *Portuguese in the Tamil Coast: Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture (1507–1749)* (Pondicherry: Navajothi, 1998), ch. 8: 'Evangelization by the Padroado Missionaries'.

[30] Stephen Jeyaseela (ed. and trans.), *Letters of the Portuguese Jesuits from Tamil Countryside, 1666–1688* (Velha Goa: IIES [Institute of Indo-European Studies], 2001). Translated from Portuguese originals.

At the same time, there was a continual and unceasing struggle between Goa (and/or Lisbon) and Rome. The *Padroado*, reflecting an increasingly entrenched institutionalization of authority in Goa, strove to remain as autonomous and free of papal interference as possible. Such efforts turned into outright resistance. This kind of ecclesiastical subversion not only continued but seems to have increased after the union of Portugal with Spain occurred—during the forty years in which Portugal itself became a 'colony' of Spain. After Portugal regained its full independence, the control of Lisbon over Goa seems never again to have been so strong. Thus, in due course, along the littoral fringes of the Indian Ocean basin, especially in areas outside of direct Portuguese rule, *Pfarangi* settlers who intermarried with Native Indians and settled down asserted their own kinds of autonomy. As a consequence, not only was the authority of Lisbon subverted, but the ecclesiastical sway of Rome was also further undermined. In the centuries that followed, however many efforts were made, even after the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* was established in 1622, Rome also was never fully able to counter the influence of the *Padroado Real*, nor did it ever succeed in fully imposing its authority upon the 'Eastern Rome' located in Goa.[31] Again, as we shall now see, for all their efforts, neither Goa nor Rome ever fully succeeded in totally subduing the Syrian and Thomas Christians.

The Imposition of Catholic Padroado Christendom

The campaign of conquest in the name of Christendom began cautiously and slowly. Care was taken not to become overextended. At least initially, Catholic Christians and Thomas Christians needed each other. Both communities being but tiny minorities within a vast and complicated and potentially hostile environment, complications of competing interests and mingled motives that multiplied did not become quickly evident. But, once hostile Islamic foes had been cleared away from the high seas and from the shoreline of the Indian Ocean, Europeans became ever more assertive, bold, and coercive. Even so, as long as Mar Jacob remained as the High *Metran* of Ankamāli, from 1503 to 1549, a semblance of accord, courtesy, and ceremonial amity continued. But, tensions seethed beneath the surface. These did not break into the open until after Mar Jacob's death in 1552. Then, as formal relations began to break down, different strategies were devised to meet each stage of confrontation—moving from protocols of conciliation and collegiality to outright hostility, conquest, and enforced 'capitulation'.

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[31] A. Mathias Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, i: *From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century* (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1982).

Each stage, in turn, brought further shattering, splintering, and schism. Thomas Christian communities slowly became divided, with at least two segments becoming Catholic, and all the others becoming profoundly alienated by the 'colonialistic' Christendom that was being imposed.

First signs of trouble arose from misunderstandings over what Europeans saw as improper business dealings and improper ritual practices. Stories of dishonest dealings mingled with rumours of ulterior motives and reports of strange forms of worship. As *Pfarangi* clerics learned more and more about what doctrines were held by Thomas Christians and what rituals were being observed, or not observed, they expressed dismay and shock. Similarly, when Thomas Christians beheld the beef eating, hard drinking, and un-couth manners of Europeans, they too were shocked and dismayed. Worse still, *Pfarangi* Christian clergy, backed by the *Estado da India* and the *Padroado*, incessantly attempted to impose their own rites and ecclesiastical authority—doing so in support of a concept that Thomas Christians did not understand. This concept, something comparable to *dar-ul-Islam*, was called 'Christendom'. The more efforts were made to impose and reinforce claims of such an institution, the more Thomas Christian congregations, in turn, dug in their heels and resisted—doing so at first covertly and then overtly.

The conflicts that began to arise, moreover, were fraught with inner contradictions and discontinuities, many of which were overlapping and tangled. For the sake of analysis, these can be broken down into those that were cultural and doctrinal, especially as pertaining to liturgical or ritual matters, and those that were political and ecclesiastical, as well as social (especially touching upon relations between communities of different eth-nicity). European Christians, on their side, were shocked by the strange beliefs and practices of Indian Christians. These they attributed to 'heretical' or 'Nestorian' ideas preserved by the Church of the East. Since Indian Christian sacred learning and worship were conducted entirely in Syriac, the entire corpus of sacred writ in that language was held to be suspect and tainted.

Thomas Christians steadfastly refused to acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the 'Mother of God' (*Theotokos*) but only as the 'Mother of Christ'. Indian Christians steadfastly refused to venerate images. Long surrounded by idolatry and by local Jewish and Muslim communities, they abhorred icons, idols, or images of any sort, whether of the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, or patron saints. Furthermore, they not only waited forty to eighty days before baptizing their newborn infants (depending upon gender), they also made a point of ceremonially offering their male offspring to God (emu-lating Hannah's prayer and Mary's Magnificat)—and they performed special baptisms and received special gifts (*chattams* or *srādhas*) for the dead, using oil as well as water for such rites. Their *kattanars* (pastors or priests), while

invariably coming from highly respected families with claims to ancient lineage, dressed no differently from other believers. Indeed, they themselves took part in both 'secular' as well as 'sacred' affairs, even going so far as to marry and beget children. Among local events of great solemnity, none surpassed occasions on which a newly ordained *kattanar* would lead believers in worship for the first time. Guests would come from afar to partake together in a sumptuous 'love feast', and would bestow especially munificent gifts and presents. These were sufficient to provide a living endowment or patrimony, part of which the new *kattanar* would then lay at the feet of his Syriac *guru*. Great festivals, celebrated annually—at Idapalli, Kuravilangtadu, Mailapur, Palayur, Kollam (Quilon), and other places—were also viewed as strange. Some of these events, lasting for days and calling for prolonged fasting, confession, and prayer, were accompanied by nights of dancing, loud drumming, and strange music (tones, tunes, and tempos), and manifested cultural styles and tastes that the *Pfarangis* could neither understand nor appreciate. Some *kattanars*, it was soon discovered, even practised 'devilish' rites—exorcising demons, determining auspicious or propitious days (for weddings or journeys) according to intricate astrological calculations, indulging in strange forms of healing, and making seemingly strange and weird vows. Trials by 'ordeal' or 'magic', such as applying red-hot irons, walking on fire, plunging arms into boiling oil, or being forced to swim among man-eating crocodiles (*muggers*), were offensive.

But the offensiveness seen in Indians was only half the story. As already indicated, things done by *Pfarangis* grossly offended the sensibilities of Indian Christians no less—violations of pollution/purity most of all. *Pfarangi* ways of eating and drinking, as well as gross sexual activity, rapacity, and cruelty, disgusted India's Christians, convincing them that the ways of the Portuguese were unspeakably scandalous. Worst of all, beyond their intolerance, was their interference with customs and practices long hallowed by Thomas Christians. Thomas Christians found themselves branded as 'heretics' and subjected to the horrors of the Inquisition. Such behaviour they never understood.

Soon ecclesiastical misunderstandings, controversies, and schisms—already bedevilling relationships—broke into the open. So complex were these conflicts, so overlapping in their consequences, that it is difficult to explain them. Thomas Christian troubles with the Church of the East (and ancient connections to Antioch, Babylon, Edessa, Chaldea, and Persia, which suffered from their own struggles, schisms, and splits) were exacerbated by European (*Pfarangi*) impositions which also reverberated throughout the Chaldean hierarchy, from the *Catholicate* (Patriarchate) in Mesopotamia down to local *metrans* (metropolitans, archbishops, and/ or bishops) and *kattanars* (pastors) in India. When Patriarch/Catholicos

Simon Bar Mama died in 1551, succession by his nephew, Simon Bar Denha, was repudiated by followers of John/Simon Saluka. But Saluka, perhaps due to help from Franciscan missionaries and confirmation in Rome, was murdered upon his return to Mosul. His successor, Mar Ebed Jesu 'Abdiso', after being confirmed by the Pope and attempting to consolidate his authority over the Chaldean Church, sent two *metrans* to India. These, however, not only encountered resistance from the *Padroado* but, after confinement in a monastery, indoctrination into the Latin rite, and release to Cochin in 1558, found themselves rejected. The already installed High *Metran*, Mar Joseph, who had been appointed by the Patriarch who had not submitted to Rome, alone remained, while the two indoctrinated newcomers were obliged to return to Mosul.

Mar Joseph, having established himself among Indian Christians as their High *Metran*, responded to Indian Christian resentments. He repudiated the Latin rite, reaffirmed his allegiance to the Chaldean Church, and renewed his attachment to the old ways: abandoning mandatory confession, condemning image worship, and insisting that Mary be known only as Mother of Christ and not as Mother of God. But, when his actions became known, he was accused of heresy, hunted down and arrested, and sent to Cochin, Goa, and Lisbon for indoctrination. After being sent back into India in 1565, he had no sooner resumed his position than he was again found to be preaching doctrines of the East. Again he suffered arrest, trial for heresy in Goa, and deportation to Lisbon and Rome. Meanwhile, in despair of ever seeing Mar Joseph again, Thomas Christians sent a deputation to the Patriarch of the (non-Roman) branch of the Chaldean Church, to beg for another High *Metran*. Mar Abraham, their new prelate, came with them back to India; but no sooner had he begun to assert his authority than Mar Joseph arrived back from Rome, armed with a fresh papal commission that allowed him to preach and teach Eastern doctrines.

Faced with a schism, Mar Joseph turned to the Portuguese for help. The Portuguese arrested Mar Abraham and shipped him off to Europe. But, en route, he managed to jump ship and escaped to Antioch. There, the Patriarch, Mar Ebed Jesu 'Abdiso', sent him to Rome so that his appointment in India could be confirmed. Both the Patriarch and the Pope, having joined together in sending Mar Abraham to India, gave him authority to divide the sphere of Thomas Christians—the foothills and uplands of the Eastern Ghats known as the *Serra*—between himself and Mar Joseph. But Mar Joseph, having already again been arrested and exiled for a third time, died in Rome (1569). Mar Abraham reached Goa in 1568. Despite having letters from both Pope and Patriarch in hand, he was again repudiated by the *Padroado*—which accused him of having tricked the Pope and ordered his arrest.

But Mar Abraham fled to Malabar and began to re-ordain all those *kattanars* whom he had previously ordained. Such was the strength of his growing authority in India that, by 1575, the *Padroado*—namely, the Archbishop and Council of Goa—determined that never again would the *Serra* be permitted to have any prelate appointed by a Chaldean Patriarch. It was decided that no '*Metran* of Ankamāli' or 'Bishop of All Thomas Christians', was ever again to enter the *Serra* without prior appointment by the King of Portugal and presentation of documents in Goa. Mar Abraham, in the meantime, having sent a special confession of faith to Pope Gregory XIII, simultaneously sent warnings to Patriarch Mar Abdiso, indicating that he was in danger of becoming a suffragan of Goa, that the Patriarch might suffer the loss of all jurisdiction and revenues in India, and that five new Syrian *metrans* would be needed to shore up the authority of the Eastern Church in India. To complicate matters further, another High *Metran*, Mar Simon, also arrived. Representing the other branch of the Eastern Church and its non-Roman ('Nestorian') Patriarch, Mar Simon managed to remain for a number of years before he too was caught and deported to Lisbon, where he died in 1599. Apprehensive that such an event might also happen to himself, Mar Abraham decided to safeguard his flock by appointing a local *kattanar*, Mar Jacob, as his 'vicar-general', so that the struggle against the Portuguese *Padroado* and Rome might continue should something untoward happen to him.

The final crisis within the still largely undivided and un-colonized ecclesiastical community of India's Thomas Christians began in 1590. It did not end until the 'confrontation', 'conquest', and 'capitulation' of one segment of those Christians at the Synod of Diamper, 20–26 June 1599. Matters came to a head when *Metran* Mar Abraham refused to ordain some fifty students who had been trained in the Jesuit seminary at Vaipikkottai. This seminary at Vaipikkottai, founded in 1587 and led by Francis Roz, combined studies in Malayalam and Syriac with Latin and Portuguese languages and compared Chaldean with Roman theology and liturgy. The dispute centred in Catholic objections to Syriac liturgy and theology, arising out of attempts by Catholics to 'correct books' and eradicate the 'Nestorian heresy'. By then, the Inquisition of Goa, established in 1560, had become an engine of domination and enforcement. While not as terrible as its Iberian sisters, especially that of Spain, the shadow of this fearsome institution was more than enough to gain the Portuguese a reputation that they were never able to erase. Rivalry between Jesuits and Franciscans aggravated and coloured the controversy, with Franciscans defending Mar Abraham from Jesuit accusations.

Thomas Christians, who saw their whole way of life threatened, seeing what their ancestors had nurtured and preserved for untold generations endangered, resisted as best they could. Told that their faith and forms of worship were flawed

and that their rejection of images—which had for so long made them distinct from idolatrous communities surrounding them — was heresy; that everything handed down to them from their traditions was unacceptable; and that their family ceremonies, customs, and traditions were an abomination, Thomas Christians sought to defend themselves. Mar Abraham refused a summons to attend the Council in Goa. The Pope (Clement VIII) authorized the Archbishop of Goa, Alexis de Menezes, to enquire into matters and to keep the *Metran* in custody. Even so no attempt to apprehend the old *Metran* was dared. Falling ill in 1595, he lingered on at Ankamāli until his death in 1597. This last High *Metran* of the undivided Christians of St Thomas did not allow himself to die without first making a further, last-ditch effort, from his deathbed, to provide for his people. He appointed his assistant, Archdeacon George of the Cross, as his successor and sent word to the Patriarch asking that the appointment of his successor as new High *Metran* be confirmed.

Archbishop Menezes, aware of these events through spies, sent orders to Ormuz that any cleric coming from Chaldea or Persia was to be intercepted. He then began his campaign to bring the entire *Serra*—namely, all Thomas Christians—under his own authority. But, when told that appointing Francis Roz, the Jesuit Vicar-General, as *Metran* would backfire, he grudgingly agreed to recognize Archdeacon George of the Cross as *Metran*, but only on condition that he make an acceptable profession of faith. The Archdeacon responded first by temporizing and then by retreating into remote and inaccessible forested mountains. Finally, after many months under cover, he summoned all *kattanars* to a solemn assembly in Ankamāli. It was there that, after the entire situation had been discussed, all *kattanars* who were in attendance made a solemn pledge: (1) that they would accept no High *Metran* except one sent from Babylon; and (2) that they would reject all attempts to enforce the primacy of the Pope and the Church of Rome as sole custodian of all Thomas Christians.

Upon learning of the Ankamāli Assembly and what had transpired, Archbishop Menezes sailed down to Cochin with an armed force to confront and apprehend the Archdeacon. He was met by a large and menacing crowd, led by their *Metran*, *panikkars* (fencing masters) with drawn swords, fifty *kattanars*, and 3,000 armed retainers. When church sanctuaries were then forcibly opened, people refused to abandon them. When libraries were destroyed and heretical texts burned, books and manuscripts were hidden. When secret agents were sent to watch and report every move the Archdeacon/*Metran* made, extremists retaliated by attempting to assassinate the Catholic prelate. At the Jesuit Seminary in Vaipikkottai, the Archbishop introduced Latin rituals and preached on the eternal dangers of disobedience to the Holy See.

Thomas Christian ignominy and indignation came to a peak on 20 June 1599, when the Archbishop convened the 'Synod of Diamper' (Udayamperur).

At the ceremonial opening of this event, amidst colourful pomp, processions, and choral masses of great solemnity, a group of 'properly trained' and 'properly submissive' Catholic *kattanars* was formally ordained into Catholic orders. Anathema was pronounced against the Patriarch of Babylon and against any *metran* who might dare to oppose Rome. All claims equating the legacy of the Apostle Thomas with that of Peter were condemned. Loud voices, marshalled in advance, shouted down all voices of opposition or protest. Syrian or Thomas Christian doctrines which had been held sacred for 1,200 years were cast aside, and decrees were pronounced insisting that, henceforth, Roman Catholic doctrines and ecclesiology, as these had been refined at the Council of Trent, would prevail.[32]

Yet, despite all the pomp and circumstance and all applications of raw force, Roman Catholic ascendancy was never left unchallenged. No sooner had Menezes returned to Europe and celebrated his 'victory of the faith' than struggles with Thomas Christians erupted. These were to be incessant, going on year after year and century after century, even down to our own time. Leaders rising out of the powerful Pakalomarram family, in which nephews had succeeded uncles for untold generations, employed carefully cultivated and specialized ancient skills of silent subversion—bending without breaking and ceaselessly dissimulating, evading, hiding, manipulating, and undermining Catholic authority. The struggle went on for fifty years. One European prelate after another was worn out trying to subdue recalcitrant Thomas Christians. Local Christian leaders devised every conceivable kind of stratagem and subterfuge to defend their ancient institutions. Eventually, on 3 January 1653, anti-Catholic *kattanars* met in solemn assembly at Koonen Cross at Mattancheri. There, and later at Vaipikkottai and Manat, they swore an oath never again to accept any *Pfarangi* prelate or any *metran* imposed upon them from outside the Eastern Church. From that day onwards, the Malankara Church marked the event as that grand moment in history when their community recovered its full independence. Some Thomas Christians then determined to go even further. Since a Portuguese blockade denied them access to patriarchs of Syria, so that no new *metrans* could be sent, they decided to consecrate one of their own *kattanars*. This action, they determined, required only a solemn 'laying on of hands' by twelve *kattanars*. On 22 May 1653, for the first time in their long history, Thomas Christians installed their own High *Metran*. Parambil Tumi (or Archdeacon Thomas) became India's first native archbishop, and took the title Mar Thoma I.[33] (This narrative is explored in further depth in Chapters 9 and 12.)

[32] Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar.*
[33] Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, ii. 32–140, 101.

The Jesuit Missions in the Mufassal

Meanwhile, in vast areas of the continent beyond the reach of Portuguese military or political power, *Pfarangi* missionaries ventured into the courts of the *rayas* of Vijayanagara, the palaces of the Nayakas of Cinji, Madurai, and Thanjavur, the *mahals* of subordinate *subadars* and sultans in Hugli, Machli-patinam, or Surat, and the durbars of the Grand Mughals of Agra and Delhi. In doing so, they manifested an entirely different kind of Catholic presence. In Madurai, Roberto de Nobili proclaimed himself to be a 'twice-born' Roman Brahman; and in the Coromandel domains of Ramnad, Sivaganga, Thanjavur, or Vellore, John de Britto and Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi left a lasting legacy as scholars of Sanskrit and Tamil literature. In the imperial durbars of the north, missionary physicians, scientists, and technicians rendered service and were rewarded with privileges and perquisites. As in China, they built libraries and won renown for their scientific knowledge. Yet Jesuits, such as Antony Monserrate, never gained official positions in Akbar's durbar such as those awarded to the successors of Matthew Ricci by the Emperor of China.[34] They privately employed correspondents (*jawab-navis*: lit. 'back-writers') who sent information and news reports from each corner of the countryside. (Since what we now call 'public media' did not yet exist, bankers, merchants, scholars, pilgrims, and rulers relied upon correspondence: distinctions between 'news reporting' and 'intelligence gathering' and 'espionage' or 'spying', as we now define such activities, had yet to be made.[35])

While several monastic orders became involved in missionary activities, some of the most important carriers of Catholic influence beyond coastal enclaves under European rule were Jesuit. In archives once at Shembha-gannur Monastery, records yet to be exploited contain details. These indicate that small communities of new converts, often from elite or high-caste families, remained largely encapsulated within prevailing cultural and social structures.

Among movements known to have occurred, the most famous was the conversion of fishing communities, Paravars and Mukkavars, along the shorelines. For the Paravars, this event was as political as it was a 'spiritual' event. This proud and venturesome seafaring folk engaged in fishing, pearl diving, trading, and piracy. Threatened by Arab sea power and Nayaka

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[34] A summary of fascinating accounts of relations between Akbar and the Jesuits is found in Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, 166–90; but encounters with Mughals did little to enhance or increase the influence or numbers of Christians in India over the long run.

[35] C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1770–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), brilliantly explores the intricacies of such processes, albeit for three centuries later.

land power, they turned to the Portuguese for 'protection'. They then adopted the Christian faith in order to strengthen bonds of mutual obligation. A formal delegation led by Vikrama Aditha Pandya, their *jāti thalavan* (caste headman), came to Goa for this purpose. The Portuguese, immediately recognizing their strategic importance, and the prospect of gaining access to lucrative pearl revenues, were only too happy to oblige them. In due course, after a furious naval battle at Vedālai, in 1538, Paravars enjoyed a time of unprecedented prosperity. At that point, however, Paravars were still Christian only in name. They knew next to nothing about their new faith until Francis Xavier landed on the 'Fisher Coast'.[36] With no knowledge of Tamil, he and three Tamil-speaking assistants spent many months walking from village to village, building prayer houses, baptizing children, and drilling children in rote recitations of the Lord's Prayer, *Ave*, Creed, and Commandments. These doctrines were to be recited aloud every morning and evening at the sound of a bell. Attempts were made to install a *kanakkapillai* (catechist/accountant) for each village, to keep track of births, deaths, and marriages for each lineage (*vamsha*). When families from other communities—Karaiyars, Shanars, Kaikolars, Pallars, and Paraiyars—asked for baptism, they too were drawn into the fold. When Mukkavars on the western 'Fisher Coast' also asked to be included, 10,000 more were baptized (in late 1844). Paravar and Mukkavar Christian identity, set by Xavier, and strengthened by his *Padroado* successors, remained firm for more than four and a half centuries.

These shoreline Christian communities retained their autonomy. Their religion, while Christian, remained conspicuously 'Hindu' or 'Nativistic'. Ceremonials, rituals, and social structures remained 'birth' and 'caste' (*jātî*) oriented. In the seaport city of Tuticorin, the *jāti thalavan* of all Paravars ruled as their 'little king', leading processions to the Great Church or Mother Church (*Periya-Koyil* or *Māda-Koyil*), where the Virgin or Our Lady of Snows was enshrined as a cultic patroness comparable to any tutelary avatar of the *Mahadevi* (lit: 'Great Goddess'—Minakshi, Kali, etc.). From his throne, situated just below her image, he would rise to unveil it, adorn it with garlands and jewels, and celebrate family ceremonies and marriages. At the annual festival of the Golden Car, an event lasting ten days, thousands of people would drag the huge-wheeled vehicle bearing the Virgin ('Mother of God') on its annual *Rath Yatra* through the streets of Tuticorin, doing so to the beating of drums, chanting of hymns and prayers, and festooning of garlands. Rituals of Paravar Christianity gained the

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[36] Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, his Times (Franz Xavier, sein Leben und seine Zeit)*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, 4 vols. (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1973–82).

approval of the *Padroado*; but not even the later Jesuits, much less the officials of *Propaganda Fide* in Rome, were satisfied with their Christianity.[37]

What happened in Madurai, not far from Tirumal Nayak's palace, did not win easy approval from either the *Padroado* or *Propaganda Fide*. Where Francis Xavier dealt with the lowest, most polluting segments of Tamil society on the Fisher Coast, Roberto de Nobili dealt with the highest and purest. In the shadow of the four towering gateways (*gopurams*) of the ancient Minakshi-Sundareswarar Temple, where thousands came each day and where throngs of students from far corners of the land flocked, a young aristocrat of Italy settled in 1606. Here, with Vishvāsam and Malaiyappan, as well as Shivadharma his *guru*, he became a scholar-missionary. His aim was to become thoroughly Brahmanized, to avoid any word or deed which might give offence, and to gain a complete mastery in Sanskrit and Tamil learning (*veda*). Acquiring fluency in texts of the Agama and of the Alvar and Nayanar poets, scrupulously abstaining from all pollution from defiled or tainted things (e.g. flesh), subsisting only on one simple meal, and wearing the 'sacred thread' of the 'twice-born' (*dvija*) along with the ochre robe of a *sannyasi*, he engaged Vedanta philosophers in public conversations and debates, and won a following of converts and disciples, including his own *guru*. His manifesto, inscribed on palm leaf and posted on his house, declared: 'I am not a parangi.[38] I was not born in the land of the parangis, nor was I ever connected with their [lineages] . . . I come from Rome, where my family holds a rank as respectable as any rajas in this country.' By cutting off all links with crude, beef-eating, alcohol-drinking barbarians from Europe, de Nobili, the 'Roman Brahman', identified himself as being Indian and became known as 'Tattuwa-Bhodacharia Swami'.[39]

Catholic learning established in Nayaka Madurai, epitomized by its repository of rare manuscripts at Shembhagannur Monastery, reached its zenith with the work of the Italian Jesuit Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi (1680–1747). This sage, also known as Viramāmuni Swami or as Dharrya Nāthaswami, produced classical *Sangam* (*Cankam*) epics, philosophical treatises, commentaries, dictionaries, grammars, translations, and tracts for Hindu Christians and non-Christians alike. Such works put him in the forefront of Tamil scholarship. His *Tembāvani*, an epic of 3,525 tetrastichs of 30 cantos, his commentary on the *Tiruvalluvar* Kural, his public disputations

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[37] Susan K. Bayly, 'A Christian Caste in Hindu Society: Religious Leadership and Social Conflict among the Paravars of Southern Tamilnadu', *Modern Asian Studies*, 15: 2 (1981), 203–34.

[38] By 'parangi', he obviously meant 'Portuguese' rather than 'European'—common soldiers had become notorious for their debauchery and drunkenness, and all kinds of habits that relegated them to being identified with some of the worst forms of pollution.

[39] Vincent Cronin, *A Pearl to India: The Life of Roberto di Nobili* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959). Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, ii. 212–80.

with scholars (*achāryas*) and mendicants (*pardarams*), won renown. The grandeur of his entourage matched that of the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram. Clothed in a long tunic bordered in scarlet and robed in pale purple, with ornate slippers, purple-and-white turban, pearl and ruby earrings, bangles and rings of heavy gold on his wrists and fingers, a carved staff of inlaid ivory in his hand, he sat in his sumptuous palanquin upon a tiger skin, with attendants fanning him, holding a purple silk parasol surmounted by a golden ball to keep the sun from touching him, and attendants marching before and behind him lifting high a standard of spread peacock's feathers (symbolizing Saraswati, goddess of wisdom); he ostentatiously displayed all the marks of divine and regal authority. Chanda Saheb, Nawab of the Carnatic, honoured him in his durbar. He bestowed the title of *Ismattee Sannyasi* upon Beschi, presented him with the inlaid ivory palanquin of Nawab's grandfather, and appointed him *diwan*, a position which awarded him a tax-exempt estate (*inām*) of four villages worth 12,000 rupees income per year. Thereafter, when Beschi ventured on any journey, his 'circuits, assuming the pomp and pageantry of a potentate, included *chobdars*, *sawars* [horsemen], caparisoned steeds, *hurcarrahs* [informers/messengers/spies], *daloyets* [shield-carrying spearmen], *nowbuts* [kettle drums] and fifes, and tents'.[40]

Conclusion

Clearly, a high degree of indigenizing acculturation characterized Catholic Christianity in India. This was especially so outside of Goa and enclaves under *Pfarangi* rule. After the Portuguese arrival in 1498 and the establishment of their *Estado da India*, Catholic orders under the *Padroado* of Goa enjoyed considerable autonomy. Often free of control from either Rome or Lisbon, they manifested a considerable transcultural adaptability. From their monastic and collegiate citadels, missionaries went into the countryside beyond spheres of Portuguese rule. Despite expanding clerical domains and newly won converts, sometimes at the expense of ancient Christian communities, including whole communities along southern shorelines and a high-profile learned tradition, Catholics failed to make any significant inroads within Mughal India. Yet, in the centuries which followed (and right down to the present), as we shall see, the earliest and strongest expressions of indigenous Christianity anywhere in the continent (aka 'subcontinent'), in both ideological and institutional forms, continued to

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[40] [Revd] L. Besse, *Father Beschi, of the Society of Jesus: His Times & his Writings* (Trichinopoly: St Joseph's, 1918), 35–49. Muttusami Pillai, *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Writings of Rev. Father C. J. Beschi, 'Honorifically' Surnamed 'Viramāmani' ('Great Champion Devotee')* (Madras, 1840).

survive in those communities that still claimed and accepted the apostolic tradition of St Thomas as the historic basis for their origin and as the doctrinal basis for their ecclesiastical authority.

The complex of Thomas Christian communities that would eventually emerge has never ceased to baffle and confuse observers. This included multifarious ecclesiastical systems: the Orthodox Syrian Church (in two branches: West Syrian of 'Antioch' and East Syrian of 'Babylon'); the Syro-Malabar Church (Latin rite: Catholic) and Syro-Malabar Church (Syrian rite: Catholic); the Syro–Malankara (Syrian rite: Catholic) and the Syro–Malankara Church (Latin rite: Catholic), and the Roman Catholic Church itself; the non-Catholic Malankara Church ('Chaldean', Syrian, or 'Jacobite'), the Church of the East or Independent Syrian Church of Malabar (Kunnamkulam); the Mar Thoma (Evangelical) Church and/or the St Thomas Evangelical Church (and factions thereof); and what later became formerly CMS-linked Syrian segments within the Church of South India. All of these communities, including branches thereof that emerged after the sixteenth century, interacted with or evolved in connection with various local branches of the Roman Catholic Church in India. Some answered, in varying degrees, to the Portuguese *Padroado* in Goa and others to the Papal Office of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in Rome. What would become the Catholic hierarchy of India, as this would evolve in the late nineteenth century, was still many years into the future. Once that event occurred, preceded by profoundly significant educational and ecclesiastical reforms, Catholic Christians, aggregating themselves under three separate hierarchies, would become the largest single Christian community within all of India.

Photographs of the following Thomas Christian churches can be found in the plate section:
Alleppy Thomas Christian Church. Plate 4.
Cheriapalli Thomas Christian Church (Small Church), Kottayam District (16th century). Plate 5.
Photographs of the following Catholic churches can be found in the plate section:
Luz (Catholic) Church, Mylapore, Chennai (1516). Plate 7.
Basilica of Bom Jesu, Old Goa (1695). Plate 8.

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS AS MISSIONARY *DUBASHIS*: CONDUITS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Christian faith, Lamin Sanneh reminds us, has always had an ability to 'transcend ethnic, national, and cultural barriers'. As such, it has neither been confined to, nor defined exclusively by, 'patterns developed in Europe'. Nor has it been bounded by nor restricted to any single culture. No single sacred language, such as Arabic for Islam, nor any single sacred genome of blood or earth, as conveyed in Brahminic or *Sanskriti* lore, has confined or fully contained it. For Christians, no one culture on earth has been sacred. Rather, all cultures, to the degree that they have reflected the *imago dei*, have been capable of becoming sacred. In this sense, various Christian communities in India, whether as distinct and separate Christianities or as claiming descent from 'pure' (s*a-varna*) lineages, can be understood more as manifold instances of the '*indigenous discovery of Christianity*' rather than merely as instances of the '*Christian discovery of indigenous societies*' by aliens who came from the West.[1]

As this perspective suggests, a two-way process of mutual appropriation began centuries ago. This has continued down to this day. The intricacy of this double process—this two-way flow of information between India and the West, in which alien missionaries and indigenous colleagues together served as conduits—is the central focus of this chapter. The most crucial role of missionaries lay in building and serving as infrastructures.

Missionaries, along with their indigenous collaborators, functioned as *dubashis*—as 'go-betweens' or conduits for information flowing between two civilizations. So too did their highly trained disciples. For better or for worse, collaborators both constituted and constructed infrastructural networks necessary for two-way transmissions of information between India

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[1] Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–22, 73–4, etc. Italics added.

and the West. Specifically, they strove to build links between Tranquebar (Tarangambadi), Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, or Tirunelveli and Travancore, on one hand, and Halle as well as Copenhagen and London, on the other. As conduits of information, whether intentionally and inadvertently, what they communicated flowed in two directions and on two levels—and did so simultaneously. The upper level of this double conduit was designed so as to inform cultural elites of two worlds, both in the East and in the West, and to provide both worlds with means for acquiring new knowledge. Detailed data about the high culture, learning, and sciences newly rising out of the Enlightenment in Europe flowed to upper-class communities in India. At the same time, a steady flow of data, in both raw material and sophisticated analysis, brought high culture to the West. This came to Halle and other German universities from Tranquebar. Once translated and published, it was then spread to other countries. Simultaneously, a lower-level conduit conveyed both the ideals, impetus, and instruments for bringing universal literacy and numeracy, along with elemental technical or vocational skills, to lower classes of people in India. The flow of this stream was specifically aimed at providing each person, whether man, woman, or child—even a person from within the most polluting communities at the bottom of the social hierarchy—with means to acquire new information in that person's own mother tongue: to read and absorb an ever increasing flow of new knowledge coming from the West.

Processes set in motion, in Halle (Saxony)[2] and then in Tranquebar, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, and Travancore in South India, were, at the very least, highly complex. The tasks of facilitating multilayered, multilingual, and multiplex flows of information in two directions and at two levels at the same time inevitably made this so. Such simultaneous flows of information—calling for an assiduously attentive and continuously disciplined collecting, packaging, and dispatching of materials for risky shipments by sea that could take up to eighteen months, both in Tranquebar and in Halle—could never be taken for granted. Pivotal within this complex system of production and transmission was the role of human agency, both European and Native. Some remarkably able, energetic, and gifted agents brought about these transmissions. They were Christian *dubashis*. The nature and results of their efforts are the focus of this chapter.

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[2] Impulses later also radiated from Herrenhut, from where Moravian Pietism (*Unitas Fratrum*) radiated worldwide.

The Impetus of Missionary Pietism

The story of these new Christian movements in India begins in Europe. Spiritual and theological roots, as well as intellectual and institutional lineages (*vamshvālis*), can be traced from Tirunelveli and Travancore back to Thanjavur and Tranquebar, and from Tranquebar back to the north-eastern German city of Halle. It was there that Evangelical Pietism and Enlightenment thought were blended into an explosive new missionary movement. Behind this new impetus lay the havoc and sufferings wrought by the Thirty Years War and the Peace of Westphalia. The spiritual and theological path laid down by Johann Arndt (1555–1621), Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), and August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) produced what some call the 'Second' or 'Pietist' Reformation.[3] This inspired the sending forth of the first waves of Evangelical (non-Catholic or 'Protestant' and later nonconformist) missionaries into the world. Later, as refugees from persecution in Moravia fled to Count Zinzendorf's shelters at Herrenhut, the same impetus would inspire massive spiritual movements, known as the Evangelical and Great Awakenings in Britain and America, and further missionary movements resulting therefrom. But, by then, missionaries had already long since reached the south-eastern shores of the Indian continent.

Reflecting Arndt's holistic belief that both the *Book of Nature* and the *Book of Grace* were divine instruments for increasing knowledge, Professor August Hermann Francke formulated his unprecedented dictum: proper belief required biblical understanding; proper biblical understanding required literacy; and proper literacy, as well as basic numeracy, practical handicrafts and vocational skills. This dictum embodied fresh doctrinal and educational innovations. In his view, Christian obedience to the Great Commission, if taken seriously, required that every single soul on earth, whether child or adult, male or female, should have a continuous personal access to the Word of God; and that each should be enabled to read in her or his own mother tongue. The logic of this radical agenda—of providing basic literacy, elemental numeracy, and practical science to any and all people everywhere—held implications that, if pursued, could be revolutionary.[4]

New methodologies were designed to implement this vision. As developed at Halle University, these led to the formation of radically new institutions. The Francke Foundations (*Stiftungen*) that evolved supported experiments by which poor and/or orphaned children, both boys and girls, could gain increasing access to literary resources and laboratory sciences. One line of innovation anticipated what later, in another time, would

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[3] F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 203 ff., 228 ff.; and *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 1–38.

[4] Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 23–38.

become known as the 'Kindergarten'. Another led to Francke's *Kunst und Wunder Kammer* (or 'Cabinet of Wonders'), a showcase for exposing and displaying new frontiers of human knowledge. Such institutions became vehicles for conveying the latest advances of Enlightenment science and technology as these came into vogue. Francke's practical innovations not only helped to bring about rapid transformations within societies of northern Germany, especially the domains of Brandenburg and/or Prussia, but also extended these to other parts of Europe, and beyond. Together, these twin engines—ideals of providing basic literacy and numeracy for all, backed by laboratory discovery—aimed to spread true knowledge (namely, the Gospel (*Evangelia*)) to the ends of the earth.

At the same time, shared faith brought about a remarkable symbiosis—a historic international collaboration (if not conspiracy), of unforeseen consequence. Between Francke and two devout royal cousins, Queen Anne of England and King Frederick IV of Denmark, an informal partnership was formed.[5] As a result of the Hanoverian Succession within the new United Kingdom, state-sponsored agencies—the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) in 1698, the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts) in 1702, and the Royal Dänische-Hallesche Mission in 1706—evolved into an informal 'Halle–Copenhagen–London' axis. Together, agencies of this triangular pact laid the foundations for what, a century later, would give rise to more individualistic forms of missionary voluntarism. Agents and impulses of Francke's radical ideals reached Tranquebar (Tarangambadi) in 1706; spreading to Thanjavur by the 1730s, Tirunelveli by the 1770s, Travancore (Tiruvanthapuram) and Serampore (Srīrampur) by the 1800s, and other parts of India thereafter.

Prior to the arrival of Pietist missionaries in Tranquebar, two Dutch Reformed chaplains in the service of Jan Company (VOC), Abraham Rogerius and Philip Baldaeus, had published reports about local cultures along Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu shorelines. As such scholars as D. Dennis Hudson and Richard Fox Young have shown—the latter more sceptical and less speculative than the former[6]—a small community of Christians in

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[5] John Foster, 'The Significance of A. W. Boehme's [Anton Wilhelm Böhm's] "The Propagation of the Gospel in the East" ', *Oecumenia* (1968), by the chaplain to Prince George of Denmark, Queen Anne's husband. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, *The Propagation of the Gospel in East*, ed. with introductory notes by A. W. Bohme (London: Downing, 1709; 1710; 1718), 'Preliminary Discourses Concerning the Character of Missions . . .' Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1707–1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 33.

[6] See Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India*, 6–9; Philippus Baldaeus, *Naauwkeurige Beschyvinge van Malabare Choromandelen het machtige Eyland Ceylon . . .* (Amsterdam, 1672). For Young's treatment of Christianity in the pre-Portuguese, Portuguese, and Dutch eras, and up to the arrival of the American missionaries in Jaffna, see pp. 42–7 of *The Bible Trembled: The Hindu–Christian Controversies of Nineteenth-Century Ceylon* (Vienna: Sammlung De Nobili, 1995), under the heading of 'The Lost Christians of Jaffna'.

Jaffna, predominantly Brahman and/or Vellalar, was one of the legacies of work by these chaplains. We also know that, even prior to the Dutch, Jaffna had been pronounced officially 'Christian' by the Portuguese. One condition of living under Portuguese rule was that every inhabitant was obliged to be a 'Christian', at least in a civic or nominal sense. As a consequence, each person, whatever his or her convictions, was assigned a Christian name. Under Dutch rule, the coastal fisher folk—Karavars, who were linked to Paravars across the Palk Strait—remained the most steadfast in their Catholic allegiance. Among various literary legacies explaining the existence of the various communities of 'converts' were stories about the faith of Brahman/Vellalar Christians that Baldaeus picked up and recorded. Some of the more curious of these stories he examined more closely. But, apart from what these two Dutch chaplains uncovered during the seventeenth century, little other information about these Christians seems to have reached non-Catholic Christians of northern Europe.

The Dubashi Pandits *of Tranquebar: Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and his Tamil Associates*

Accomplishments of the earliest Halle missionaries as translators and transmitters of information between the East and West are now becoming more widely understood and appreciated. As agents or brokers or conduits, Ziegenbalg, Schultz, and Fabricius carried the essence of both Pietist and Enlightenment cultures to India. They not only translated a considerable corpus of German-European culture into Tamil and Telugu, but, at the same time, they also did their best to translate the essence of Tamil, as well as some Telugu, literary culture into German. What would later be accomplished by Schwartz and his various disciples (*sishiyas*) could never have been done without what predecessors, both European and Indian, had already accomplished.

On 9 July 1706, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau arrived in Tranquebar (Tarangambadi). This seaport lay adjacent to lush green lands on the northern edge of the Cauvery Delta. This delta, since Chola times, had developed 'one of the finest irrigation systems in the world'. Leased to Danish merchants by Raghunatha Nayaka of Thanjavur in 1620, the tiny settlement had struggled for survival. Such struggles had become more acute after the Thanjavur Nayaka was overthrown in 1674 by Maratha forces of Shivaji and his brother Ecoji. When Ecoji's son, Shahuji Maharaja, had besieged Tarangambadi for over a year in 1700, forces from the English East India Company in Madras had sent ships to rescue the Danish outpost. Portuguese and Muslim refugees fleeing from threats along the coast had found shelter within this tiny fortified enclave.

Thus, when English ships conveyed two German missionaries to India and they suddenly showed up in Tranquebar, one can perhaps understand the reaction of the acting Danish Governor. Johann Sigismund Hassius saw these missionaries not only as a danger to trade but as possibly provoking another attack from the Maratha Raja of Thanjavur. But, whatever his reasons, he harassed and persecuted the young missionaries. Yet, by imprisoning Ziegenbalg for a few months, from 19 November 1708 to 26 March 1709, he unwittingly helped the missionaries' cause. His action clearly separated them from the autocratic rule of his political establishment and thereby won favour and sympathy from local Tamil residents. Later, when it was discovered that these missionaries were actually university-trained scholars and that, hence, they might serve as excellent teachers for Danish children, the position of missionaries within the colony seems to have become more secure.

Mastery of Language

While Plütschau worked more within the Portuguese community, Ziegenbalg concentrated on the mastery of Tamil culture. This required humility. He sat on the ground with schoolchildren and took part in their lessons. He listened to sounds they uttered and tried to replicate each, carefully pronouncing each word and each phrase and sentence, even before he understood what it meant. These sounds he repeated over and over again—often hundreds of times. At the same time, when children drew Tamil letters in the sand, he did the same, matching each character, word, and sentence with the sound that it represented.

He used ancient mnemonic devices of India, endless tonal cadences of rhythmic drills by which words and phrases and sentences locked Tamil vocabulary and verses into his memory. Hardly a waking hour passed when he was not memorizing, copying, reading, and being read to. This rigorous programme explains the speed and thoroughness with which Ziegenbalg gained such a mastery. Within one year, he delivered his first Tamil sermon and wrote his first Tamil tract. Within two years, he had put together two Tamil dictionaries—one of 17,000 words and another of over 20,000 words—as well as a grammar. In doing this, he consulted already well-known classical glossaries and ancient Tamil verses that he had steadily kept learning.

Collaboration of *Pandits*

None of this would have been possible had Ziegenbalg not enjoyed the confidence and support of a growing circle of Tamil admirers, colleagues, friends, informants, and teachers. Indeed, his rapid progress astonished and

delighted local Tamils; and his open and engaging personality quickly won him popularity among Tamil poets and scholars. Friendship with Moda-liappa, a young man whom he met soon after his arrival, would last for the rest of his life. Within a week, he had also met and then employed a 70-year-old blind *pandit* named Watthiar. Ziegenbalg soon invited Watthiar to bring his whole school—perhaps a 'verandah-school' (*tinnaippallikūttam*)—to his house. In his quest to gain an ever more perfect mastery of Tamil vocabulary, grammar, usages, and literature—a quest that lasted for the rest of his life—he constantly strove to find more renowned informants, tutors and scholars. Alakappan and Arumagum, Danish Company *dubashis* who spoke and read not only Danish and Dutch, German, Portuguese, and English, but also Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Marathi, helped him to grasp distinctions, double meanings, and delicate nuances. By 1710, he was also able to employ Ganapati Vāttiyār ('Ganapati-Teacher'), a converted poet who, having already become his colleague and friend for some time, also became his partner and research assistant.

Collection and Transmission of Cultural Materials

Mastery of Tamil was accompanied by systematic schemes for the collection of Tamil materials of every conceivable kind. Hundreds of palm-leaf (*cadjan*) manuscripts and books, and compilations of raw data, were acquired. What could not be purchased outright was copied—as often as not in duplicate copies, so that one copy could be sent to Halle. Each item so acquired, beyond what was reserved for his own use and for preservation within his own (mission) library, he carefully wrapped in waterproof bundles for dispatch to Europe. By 1714, he had acquired 645 Tamil books. Each item he carefully catalogued and described. He also recorded his own observations, reporting on virtually every kind of phenomenon and activity. What he dispatched to Europe included data describing flora and fauna, weather patterns, astronomical or meteorological events, oceanographic findings, and countless other categories of data about the natural world. He also sent artefacts and exhibits, drawings, charts, and maps. Long before newspapers or other forms of public media could convey such information across the world, reports from Tranquebar told Europeans about significant local events—virtually everything that lived or moved in South India, both animate and inanimate, whether small and great, was described and then subjected to analysis concerning its importance. Reports sent to Europe pertained to historical events, social structures, elements of natural philoso-phy or natural theology, and much more. These materials can still be seen within the Franckeschen Stiftungen. The Halle Reports (*Hallesche Berichte*), SPCK Reports in London, and materials preserved within the Royal

Danish Archives would be of inestimable worth for later generations of missionaries and research scholars. These were filled with details about indigenous beliefs, social and religious practices, and esoteric rituals. Among 112 Tamil books acquired during Ziegenbalg's first two years in India were such classics as Manikyavacaka's *Tiruvāchaka* and Tiruvalluvar's *Tirukkurāl*. Consignments to Halle included some 280 palm-leaf (*cadjan*) manuscripts: 88 in Tamil ('Damul'), 188 in Telugu ('Warungu'), 3 in Malayalam ('Kerendum'), and 1 in Sinhala, with another 20 not yet identified. Each new generation would collect and dispatch more materials.

No less impressive was the continuous flow of materials coming to India from Europe. These included technical apparatus required for the transplanting of the European Enlightenment to India. Tamil fonts, fashioned in Halle, soon made it possible to print Tamil papers, pamphlets, textbooks, teaching materials, and other works. Among the first printed items was a Tamil translation of the Gospel of Matthew. Other portions of Scripture followed and continued to be produced in the generations that followed. In due course, technical apparatus and scientific instruments were also brought from Europe, along with increasing numbers of European books.

Establishment of Model Modern Schools

Ziegenbalg's network of 'charity schools' or 'orphan schools' (*dharmappallikkūdam*), modelled on the Francke *Weisenhaus* prototype in Halle, was started on 22 March 1707.[7] In accordance with Francke's dictum—that no person should ever be denied access to literacy (if only in order to read Sacred Writ) and that no person was to remain untrained in numeracy and some practical skill—a truly revolutionary kind of modern institution began to take shape. Once firmly planted, this model school was then replicated—and multiplied. Other schools, together with small congregations of Tamil Christians were formed. Tamil disciples were trained as pastors and teachers. As numbers of trained Tamil teachers and pastors increased, plans were made for extending the Halle system further into the countryside.

What made this venture distinctive was its strategic trajectory. Unlike Jesuits of the Madurai Mission, such as Roberto de Nobili and Giuseppe Beschi, who aimed mainly at capturing the respect of the Brahmanical elite, Ziegenbalg and those who came after him strove, first of all, to provide basic literacy for the common people and for the lowlier communities. To that end he collected, and studied, as many manuscripts as he and his associates could acquire. Ziegenbalg not only mastered Tamil, in both its classical and colloquial forms, but also made comprehensive and systematic studies of

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[7] Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India*, 20–1, 93–4, 101.

palm-leaf manuscripts and books, in order to define and distinguish varieties of idioms and usages. His Tamil sermons, hymns, ethical writings, and translations demonstrated a profound appreciation for Tamil culture, both classical and contemporary, and a remarkable sensitivity to the feelings and dignity of those with whom he dealt—especially the lowly. Determined to make written Tamil available to ordinary people, he was the first scholar ever to complete a Tamil translation of the New Testament (printed in 1714/15). However, he did not survive long enough to complete his translation of the Old Testament.

Engagement in Intellectual Discourse and Scholarship

Increasingly amazed at the breadth and depth of high Tamil (*Cankam*) culture, learning, and wisdom, Ziegenbalg made it a point to explore the beliefs of various Tamil *pandits* and poets and *pandarams*. As his fame spread far and wide, Tamil *pandits* and poets came long distances to visit him. In due course, they became his friends. What attracted them was his knowledge and his ability to enter into serious discussions with them. He wrote letters to many of those whom he considered to be the most astute and learned among Tamil authorities, asking them to explain the philosophical and rational reasons for what they believed. To that end, he travelled beyond Tranquebar so that he could engage non-Christian thinkers in public debates and dialogues.[8]

Much of what Ziegenbalg accomplished consists of raw data found in two massive collections of letters to Halle that, together, are now known as the *Malabarische Korrespondenz*. He and Johann Ernest Gründler, who joined him in 1709, translated these from Tamil and sent them to Francke in Halle. Recently carefully edited and selectively republished by Kurt Liebau,[9] these reflect a full appreciation for the sophistication of India's cultures. What Ziegenbalg accomplished has been revealed by Daniel Jeyaraj. Jeyaraj's scholarship has given the world a much fuller understanding of the depths of insight attained by Ziegenbalg. Ziegenbalg's exhaustive studies of social life and religious institutions led to the completion of two remarkable works—first his *Malabarisches Heidenthum*,[10] completed in 1711; and his

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[8] Daniel Jeyaraj, *A German Exploration of Indian Society: Ziegenbalg's 'Malabarian Heathenism'* (Chennai: MIIS, 2006), 34–41.

[9] *Die Malabarische Korrespondenz: Tamilische Brief an deutsche Missionare: Ein Auswahl*, ed. Kurt Liebau (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1998).

[10] First published by A. Caland (Amsterdam: Abkurzung MH, 1926), this has been translated by Daniel Jeyaraj, and published under the title *A German Exploration of Indian Society: Ziegenbalg's 'Malabarian Heathenism'* (Chennai: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, 2006).

Genealogie der malabarischen Götter,[11] completed in 1713. These towering
works of scholarly erudition can be seen as precursors of an Orientalist
scholarship that would not emerge for another seventy years. Ziegenbalg's
efforts to explain what people in India believed were hardly appreciated by
Europeans back in Halle. Francke declared that 'Missionaries were sent out
to extirpate heathenism, and not to spread heathenish nonsense in Europe.'
He failed to realize that sharing the Gospel would require much deeper and
more sympathetic appreciations of common and universal human aspir-
ations and that such spiritual elements needed to be drawn from the classical
and popular cultures of India.[12] Worn out and heart broken by his mentor's
unsympathetic words, as well as by harsh treatment of a Danish mission
director in Copenhagen, Ziegenbalg died in 1719. (He was buried in the
New Jerusalem Church, a beautifully eclectic building the construction of
which he had just completed.)

The Dubashi *Missionaries of Madras: Benjamin Schultz, Johann Philip Fabricius, and Telugu*

The foundations of *dubashi* infrastructures laid by Ziegenbalg, as Daniel
Jeyaraj, Arno Lehman, and others have shown, benefited succeeding gen-
erations, both in India and the West. These were further enhanced and
enriched by fresh contributions of successive missionaries, both European
and Native.[13] Names of at least seventy-nine successive missionaries who
came to Tranquebar from Europe are recorded for the period from 1720 to
1840. Names of many times more local Tamils who worked with them need
to be investigated and their achievements more fully explored. Perhaps the
next truly outstanding Halle missionary *dubashi* was Benjamin Schultz. Like
Ziegenbalg and other predecessors, he visited Madras several times and
commented on opportunities he found there. An earlier SPCK 'orphan
school' had already been attempted in 1716; but it was only after Schultz
attracted the notice of the English Governor of Fort St George that he
was eagerly invited to establish a model school there.[14] This happened in
1727. During the nearly seventeen years that he worked in Madras, the

[11] Annotated translation of the original manuscript ed. Daniel Jeyaraj (Halle: Verlag der
Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle [Neue Hallesche Berichte 3], 2003); and Daniel Jeyaraj,
*Genealogy of the South Indian Deities: An English Translation of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg's Original
German Manuscript, with Textual Analysis and Glossary* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).
[12] Daniel Jeyaraj, *Inkulturation in Tranquebar: Der Beitrag der frühen dänisch-halleschen Mission zum
Werden einer indisch-einheimischen Kirche (1706–1730)* (Erlangen, 1996 [Halle University, Ph.D. diss.,
1995]).
[13] J. P. Fabricius and C. F. Schwartz (arr. 1749–; Tiruchirapalli, 1766–; Thanjavur, 1778– d.1798).
[14] One reason for his departing from Tranquebar was his inability to work with Christian
T. Walter—a missionary who remained in India from 1725 to 1740.

'orphan school' that he set up in Vepery and the Tamil congregation attached thereto flourished.

Schultz became one of the first European scholars to give serious attention to the study of Telugu language and literature. To this end, he collected many Telugu (or 'Warungu') palm-leaf manuscripts, many of which can still be found within the Archives of the Franckeschen Stiftungen. As far as is known, he never produced such monumental pillars of scholarship as his predecessor; yet he did compile a Telugu–German dictionary, a rudimentary Telugu grammar, and Telugu translations of the Gospels. Johann Philip Fabricius, Schultz's successor, worked in Vepery from 1740 to 1791. He strove to perfect translations and other works that Ziegenbalg had begun. To that end, he produced a Tamil grammar (in English), an English–Tamil dictionary, and new translations of both Old and New Testaments—a work which Vedanayakam Sastri would later extol as 'the gold translation of the immortal Fabricius'.[15] Alas, such was his immersion within the local culture that this, together with his inability to handle his own financial affairs, led him into ruin—so much so that, as an old man, he was thrown into debtor's prison.

The Raja-Guru *and* Sishiyas *of Thanjavur: Christian Friedrich Schwartz and his Disciples*

As early as 1727, the quality of instruction being imparted in Tranquebar caught the eye of Rajanayankan, a captain (*servaikāran*) in the palace guard at Thanjavur. Apparently brought up as a Roman Catholic, he had avidly read Tamil Gospels produced in Tranquebar. He came to Tranquebar accompanied by some fellow soldiers who he had brought to the faith. After being accepted and then made pastor/teacher (or catechist) for Thanjavur, this officer, despite threats to his life, became instrumental in introducing a 'new model' Tranquebar school into the kingdom. In 1731, supported by a royal land grant (*inām*) secured from the Raja, he opened the first such school within the very heart of this city, within sight of its great citadel and ancient temples. As small congregations proliferated, more pastor/teachers were needed to join him. In 1733, a high-born Vellalar, baptized by the name of Aaron, became the first fully ordained Tamil minister to work among Christians at Mayavaram, within the Thanjavur kingdom. Eight years later, another Catholic convert by the name of Diogo was ordained and sent to

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[15] E. Arno Lehmann, *Es begann in Tranquebar* (Berlin: Evang. Veragsanstalt, 1955); and abridged English translation, *It Began in Tranquebar* (Madras: CLS, 1956). Johannes Ferdinand Fenger, *History of the Tranquebar Mission, Worked out from the Original Papers*, trans. Emil Francke (Tranquebar, 1863), with biographies of 98 Evangelical Lutheran missionaries in India.

Thanjavur. By then, the number of baptized believers among congregations within the Cauvery Delta (Tranquebar and Thanjāvur) came to 3,766.

But among all pre-colonial, or anti-colonial, Evangelical/Pietist missionaries of eighteenth-century India, none surpassed Christian Friedrich Schwartz. By the time of his death in 1798, after forty-eight years of unceasing efforts,[16] Tamil Pietist congregations and schools were becoming firmly established as far south as Kaniya Kumari (Cape Comorin), and beyond, into the domains of Travancore. Much, if not most of this record of accomplishment was due to the work of those who were the disciples or *sishiyas* (*chelas*) of Schwartz. His own legacy lay not so much in great literary or scholarly works as in great accomplishments of disciples who appropriated for themselves what came from the West and then, having digested and transformed what they learned, led movements among their own peoples.

The Quintessential Missionary *Dubashi*

Schwartz's arrival in 1750 occurred at a time when the entire peninsula of Coromandel and the Carnatic was embroiled in war. Sepoy forces of the English Company under Clive were engaged in campaigns against those of the French Company under Dupleix. Devastation suffered by local peoples during these troubles would concern Schwartz for the rest of his life. His reports conveyed heart-rending accounts, horrific details, and insightful analysis. From the grass roots, he witnessed the rise of the English Company, from its coastal enclaves and city-states to overlordship. Danish territories, such as Serampore (Srirampur) and Tranquebar, remained on the sidelines, hoping to stay unscathed. But, despite his aversion to political affairs and his antipathy to imperial expansion, Schwartz could not escape being swept along by the tide of events.

Missionary *Dubashi* as Master *Guru*

A brilliant youth, Schwartz had studied Tamil and Telugu with Schultz at the Halle Weisenhaus even before coming to India. Combining Enlightenment learning with Pietist fervour and proficient in European languages (modern, classical, and biblical), he also commanded fluency in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Marathi, Dakhni-Urdu, Persian, and Portuguese. As his renown as a schoolmaster quickly spread, an ever expanding coterie of Tamil disciples gathered around him. These, once trained as pastor/teachers, known as

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[16] Hugh Nicholas Pearson, *Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of the Reverend Christian Frederick Swartz, to which is Prefixed, a Sketch of the History of Christianity in India*, 2 vols. (London, 1834, 1835, 1839). Wilhelm Germann, *Missionar Christian Schwartz: Sein Leben und Wirken aus Briefen des Halleschen Missionsarchivs* (Erlangen, 1870).

'Helpers', became responsible for new congregations within the Cauvery River delta and beyond. Two by two, they went out into the countryside, organizing congregations and schools for new converts—in Thanjavur (Tanjore), Tiruchirapalli (Trichinopoly), and Tirunelveli. By 1760, Schwartz had crossed the Palk Strait and travelled among Tamil villages of Jaffna (Dutch Ceylon, aka Sri Lanka).

Missionary *Dubashi* as Military Chaplain

In 1762, while stopping in Tiruchirapalli, Schwartz received a plea for humanitarian help. The fort's powder magazine had blown up, killing many soldiers and sepoys. The Company's commandant, Major A. Preston, begged for help in burying the dead and comforting the wounded. Since the missionary would accept no personal emolument, a 'prayer school' hall was built for Tamil Christians in lieu of pay. Two years later, when Company troops marched to besiege Madurai, the missionary again filled the role of 'acting' military chaplain. In appreciation for his tending the sick, wounded, and dying sepoys and soldiers, a purse of 900 *pagodas* (*hūn*), worth £360, was bestowed upon Schwartz by the Nawab of the Carnatic, whose palace in Tiruchirapalli was then under Company 'protection'. These funds were deemed acceptable only on condition that they paid for building more 'orphan schools'. When Preston's successor, Colonel Wood, also turned to Schwartz and offered to build a proper (*pukka*) place of worship if he remained as chaplain, he hesitantly consented, but only on the condition that such an arrangement met with approval by authorities in Europe.

Lengthy negotiations between London, Madras, Halle, and Copenhagen led to Schwartz being 'loaned' to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). The old triangular collaboration, while it continued, was altered so as to permit Schwartz to receive ordination as an Anglican without ceasing to also serve as an ordained Lutheran. Meanwhile, within a large compound in Tiruchirapalli, 'Christ Church' was dedicated on 18 May 1766; and new model English- and Tamil-medium schools also began to flourish. Two years later, in 1768, Schwartz consented to being formally gazetted as military chaplain for Tiruchirapalli, on a salary of one hundred pounds sterling (£100), on condition of funds given him being ploughed back into local educational, missionary, and outreach projects. Ever buoyant and cheerful, engaging and caring, and gentle in manner, Schwartz provided pastoral comfort to many kinds of soldiers and sepoys—British, German, Portuguese, Maratha, Mughal, Telugu, and Tamil—to such an extent that he won a place in the hearts of officers and troopers alike. At the same time, his Tamil 'Helpers' and *Upadesiars* continued to go, two by two, out into towns and villages of the countryside. When not on the road, they would meet with him each morning and evening, for critical self-analysis and

prayer. Their task was to provide basic literacy and teaching for people within each congregation. As often as possible, Schwartz also accompanied the 'Helpers' on their forays to distant places.

In 1773, unforeseen events brought about another major shift in functions. As war again ravaged the land and the Nawab's forces besieged and stormed Thanjavur, bringing dire suffering to the city, Schwartz organized relief efforts. Reaching out to the poor and helpless, Christian and non-Christian alike, he managed to acquire loans for massive purchases of grain. His simple word was sufficient to underwrite state loans and stabilize prices. As a result, mass starvation was alleviated and he became celebrated as a local hero. In 1776, soon after the Raja of Thanjavur (Tulaji) was restored to his throne, he begged Schwartz to move to the city permanently—as his adviser and helper. Two years later, having succeeded in getting Christian Joseph Pohle of Tranquebar appointed military chaplain in Tiruchirapalli in his place, Schwartz was able to accept the Raja's offer. As a token of his appreciation, the Raja made an endowment of land and funds sufficient for the erection of a special new and larger place of Christian worship. Prayer/school halls of local Tamil Christian congregations that had been damaged or destroyed during the war were rebuilt. Thanjavur became Schwartz's permanent abode for the remaining twenty years of his life.

Missionary *Dubashi* as Diplomat/Statesman

But before Schwartz could settle in his new abode he was urgently summoned to Madras. The Governor-in-Council asked him to undertake a difficult and sensitive ('secret') diplomatic mission. Hyder Ali had specifically requested that 'the missionary' be sent. In the eyes of the Mysore ruler, no one else was both sufficiently trustworthy and, at the same time, fluent in the requisite languages (Urdu, Persian, Marathi, Tamil, etc.). He would allow no other *dubashi*, *munshi*, or *vakil* to distort the message that he wanted to communicate to authorities in Madras. Schwartz reluctantly agreed to go, if only 'to prevent a further effusion of blood'. At the same time, he made it clear that he would serve only as long as it was understood, by all concerned, that he would go only as a missionary and only as an emissary of peace—and not as an agent of any European power. His letters show that he did not approve of the British East India Company's expansionist policies, which he saw as having only increased suffering and want among the poorest and most helpless peoples.

The journey took eight weeks. Riding in a palanquin with an unarmed entourage, Schwartz took advantage of every opportunity to stop along the way and to meet with people at each village where his party stopped to rest. When he finally arrived at Srirangapatnam (Seringapatam), he was ceremonially and graciously received. Both in public durbar and private audience,

where frank words were exchanged, he was accorded tokens of courtesy and respect. His mission completed, he then slowly wended his way back to Madras. There he reported on his conversations and conveyed Hyder Ali's message. He made a point of handing over the prize purse of 300 rupees that Hyder Ali had given him; and, when this was then handed back to him, he made clear that the money would only be used to endow an 'orphan school' in the city of Thanjavur. From neither government, Madras or Mysore, would he accept any personal payment beyond expenses for travel. He did, however, succeed in securing for Pohle, his successor in Tiruchirapalli, the same chaplain's salary of £100 per year which he himself had previously received. The words that Schwartz conveyed from Mysore to Madras were never made public. But his personal impressions of Hyder and of the whole episode were conveyed in letters to Europe.[17] He was never convinced that his efforts did much to avert the war that he saw coming. Nor did he hold the Company blameless in these matters.

Missionary *Dubashi* as Secretary of State

Returning to Thanjavur, Schwartz found that the construction of the Gothic stone place of worship paid for by the Maharaja's generosity had been completed. On 16 April 1780, this splendid structure, capable of seating over 500, was dedicated. He named it St Peter's Church. In Vallam, not far away, a spacious house, prayer/school hall, and other *pukka* buildings within an enclosed garden were also constructed. But, again, before the facilities could bring him either benefit or enjoyment, another war disturbed the tranquillity of Thanjavur and its Christian community. Hyder Ali's armies broke into the Carnatic plain '100,000 strong', destroying Baillie's brigade near Kanchipuram, and sweeping up to the very gates of Madras itself. Once more, Schwartz and his 'Helpers' (or 'Pilgrims') were called upon to tend those who were hungry, sick, wounded, and dying. At this time, Hyder Ali gave specific commands that the missionary and his people were to be allowed to pass among his own troops without molestation. 'He is a good man,' he remarked, 'and means no harm to my government.' Later, when peace negotiations were resumed, Schwartz was again called upon to act as a *dubashi*. Twice more, in the years that followed, he acted in this capacity. But these attempts failed: first, when Tipu Sultan's pickets stopped him at the border (Hyder Ali having died in 1782); and second, when his legs became so afflicted with boils ('eruptions') that he could not travel. In his memoir, Colonel William Fullarton, commander of the Madras field force, wrote: 'The integrity of this irreproachable

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[17] These are found mostly in his letters to authorities of the *Weisenhaus* (Orphan House) in Halle and of the SPCK in London, later printed in the famous 'Halle Reports'.

missionary has retrieved the character of Europeans from imputations of general depravity.'[18]

Meanwhile, fresh outbreaks of war brought further devastation to Thanjavur. This was aggravated by the rapacious avarice, depredations, and oppression of the Maharaja's own servants. As the countryside was laid waste, thousands fled from their villages. Again, Schwartz came to the rescue. Again, after he made a personal pledge to bankers and money-lenders, 7,000 people returned to their homes and took up the cultivation of their fields. The Company's Political Resident to the Court recommended that the Maharaja put Schwartz in charge of a special investigation for the reform of local government finances. He was formally appointed 'Royal Interpreter' (*Raja-Dubashi*), on a salary of £100 per year. In the face of mounting rapacity of the Maharaja's other servants, he drew up a 'State Paper'. In this, he suggested that the administration should be entirely and thoroughly reformed. At his insistence, the Maharaja dismissed corrupt officials. Without coercion, a modicum of peace was restored to the realm. With the assistance of his own team of 'Helper/Pilgrims/*Upadesiars*', Schwartz was temporarily put in charge of the state's administration.

Missionary *Dubashi* as *Raja-Guru* and Regent

In 1787, shortly after stabilizing the finances of the Thanjavur realm, Raja Tulaji's health deteriorated. As he lay dying, he called the missionary to his bedside. Having just adopted his sister's 10-year-old son Serfoji as his successor, Tulaji placed the boy's fate into the hands of the missionary. Begging him to protect the boy, he also formally appointed Schwartz as both guardian and *raja-guru*. Initially, feeling overwhelmed, Schwartz declined. But when threats against the boy's life began to come to his attention, he changed his mind. Madras authorities ratified the adoption and recognized Schwartz as the boy's guardian. After further attempts were mounted against Serfoji's life, the deeply worried old missionary made the long journey to Fort St George in 1793—bringing the young prince and three young widows of the late Maharaja along with him for the sake of their safety. The Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, whose forces had just defeated Tipu Sultan, heeded Schwartz's appeal for protection. A special armed cordon was placed around the prince's quarters in Thanjavur. But, by the time, many months later, that formal approval of this action from the Company's Court of Directors in London reached Thanjavur, Schwartz himself had died and the prince was on his own.

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[18] *A View of the British Transactions in India and an Account of the Military Operations in the Southern Parts of the Peninsula during the Campaigns of 1782 to 1787 in Two Letters, by an Officer Late in the Company's Service* (London, 1787; 2nd edn. 1788).

Schwartz died on 13 February 1798. At his memorial service, his adoptive son Serfoji Maharaj himself read deeply heartfelt English verses which he had composed for the occasion. He soon also sent to England for the making of a monument. This impressive white marble sculpture, produced by Flaxman, was placed in St Peter's Church. It depicts Schwartz on his deathbed, surrounded by his beloved Tamil 'Helper/Pilgrims' and holding the Maharaja's hand. Hundreds of miles away, in Old St Mary's of Fort St George, a huge brass memorial was ordered by the East India Company. Inscribed by Bacon, it also gave tribute to Schwartz as a missionary states-man. Except for a small allowance left to his sister's family in Germany, all of Schwartz's possessions, including over £9,000 sterling, were left to support the projects in India to which he had given his life—to the last, he showed a personal indifference to earthly power or wealth. Indeed, in a world then awash in corruption and injustice, both European and Indian, his personal integrity was never questioned. 'He was', Bishop Reginald Heber later wrote, 'one of the most active and fearless, as he was one of the most successful, missionaries since the Apostles.'

The *Sishiya Pandits* and their Legacies

The crowning legacy of Schwartz as *Huzur Dubashi* and Master *Munshi* of Thanjavur, at the heart of all his other achievements, lay in the field of education. This was reflected both in the quality of the institutional struc-tures he erected and in the quality of the individual disciples whom he assiduously nurtured and trained throughout his career of nearly half a century. At the pinnacle of his work was the system of model 'public' schools that he founded. These were initially subsidized by the rajas of Thanjavur, Shivaganga, and Ramnad. As such, they embodied the vision of Professor Francke in Halle that Ziegenbalg had first brought to India: blending a mixed Tamil–English curriculum with biblical ideals and the very latest principles of science and technology from the West—something available nowhere else in India at that time. Advanced training provided in these schools so impressed the Company's Political Resident at Thanjavur that he persuaded the government at Fort St George (Madras) and the Company's Directors in London to also pay an annual subsidy for the support of these schools so that rapidly rising demands for highly trained staff within the burgeoning Madras Presidency could be met. This was done even though none of these schools, strictly speaking, lay within the Com-pany's own territories. As the renown of the pedagogical excellence and promise of these schools spread, Maratha Brahman families vied with each other to get their sons admitted. Youths from these schools soon filled the uppermost cadres of the Company's governments in South India,

occupying civil service positions immediately below the rank of 'cove-
nanted' posts held by Europeans. Indeed, far outnumbering European
civil servants, the Raj could not have functioned without their service.

What made this possible, throughout all the Schwartz years, was his
uncanny knack for locating, recruiting, and training brilliant, devout, and
highly gifted disciples. Variously called 'Helpers of God', 'Pilgrims of God',
or *Upadesiars* of God, it was this group of disciples (*sishiyas*) who, as individ-
uals, continued to spearhead Christian expansion long after Schwartz had
passed from the scene. At the same time that some disciples were reaching
out to peoples within the Thanjavur realm itself, others were actively
extending kinds of influences far and wide across South India—from Tran-
quebar and Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur, further south to Tirunelveli, and
even as far as Kaniya Kumari and the southern districts of Travancore that
were subject to Raja Verma rulers of Tiruvanthapuram.

So far attention has been focused almost exclusively upon European
agency. The role of German missionaries as *dubashis*—as agents or brokers,
go-betweens and interpreters who served as conduits for the two-way flow
of information between two civilizations, between East and West—was
almost entirely infrastructural. While such pioneering missionaries as Zie-
genbalg, Schultz, and Fabricius had their own collaborators, informants,
gurus, and *pandits*, some of whom were remarkable, comparatively little is
known about them. This is far from the case with the disciples of Schwartz.
Indeed, some of the Schwartz *sishiyas* were of such high quality and left such
legacies of their own that their achievements can be seen as far surpassing
the works of their mentor himself. Especially noteworthy disciples were
two gifted Vellalars, Sathyanathan Pillai and Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Pillai/
Sastriar; two courageous Nadars, aka Shanars, Sundaranandam David of
Tirunelveli and Maharasan Vedamanickam of Mayiladi, in southern Tra-
vancore; at least one India-born German, Johann Caspar Kohlhoff; and a
Brahman widow, Royal Clorinda (Bhonslé?). Many of these *Upadesiar*-
Helpers had been virtually adopted and brought up as 'sons' within
Schwartz's household. On each Schwartz had lavished affection, occasion-
ally mingled with mild admonition. In turn, two of Kohlhoff's disciples
(*sishiyas*), Maharasan Vedamanickam and Wilhelm Tobias Ringeltaube, can
also be seen as 'virtual grandsons' of Schwartz. The Halle–Tranquebar–
Thanjavur lineage (*vamshvāli*) or tradition of missionary *dubashis* lasted long
after Schwartz himself was gone. But, among them all, Serfoji Maharaja
stood alone—a unique prince in the India of his day.

Serfoji Maharaja
Schwartz's career as Regent-Protector, *raja-guru*, and 'Father' to Serfoji
brought posthumous dividends. Years of rigorous training and tutelage

produced an accomplished, enlightened, and well-read prince, someone
fully capable of governing the state in his own right. Indeed, the Maharaja so
developed in competence, learning, and outlook that, during his thirty-year
reign, Thanjavur became a model kingdom and, as such, set a pattern later
emulated by Mysore, Travancore, and other princely states. Inspired by the
spirit of the Enlightenment, Schwartz's adoptive 'son' and *sishiya* imbibed a
zeal for intellectual life. So much was this so that many years later, in 1831,
the Maharaja would become a founding member of the Royal Geographic
Society. Yet, throughout the years of his long reign, he never ceased to
think of the old missionary who had served him until he drew his last breath,
not only as his *guru*, 'Protector', and the 'Regent' of his realm, but also as his
personal 'Father' and 'Friend'. Indeed, Serfoji would later recall that, at the
end, during his final illness, he had gone to the bedside of his mentor and
received a special blessing. The young prince had been gently admonished
and exhorted to rule *all* of his subjects with even-handed justice, not to
forget the protecting of his Christian subjects from persecution, and always
to submit himself to the tender grace and mercy of the One and true God
who alone could give him true and lasting inner peace.

   While his mentor was still alive, portions of the old Thanjavur palace
began to be renovated. One wing, dubbed the 'Saraswati Mahal', contained a
special 'Room of Wonders'—a *Kunst und Wunder Zimmer* (or *Wunder
Kammer*)—reflecting the ideas and ideals that Schwartz had brought from
the Francke Stiftungen in Halle. The Saraswati Mahal Library was to be the
crowning symbol of scholarly and scientific achievement of the Thanjavur
Maharaja. Vast collections of rare manuscripts and books, together with
artefacts and specimens of natural objects, both biological and geological,
were carefully preserved and catalogued. These materials, together with the
latest in scientific equipment and instruments ordered from Europe, were
placed within the Saraswati Mahal's own 'Cabinet of Arts and Wonders'
(*Kunst und Wunder Kammer*). The importance of this institution, in cultural
terms, has been aptly demonstrated by the remarkable scholarship of Indira
Viswanathan Peterson.[19] Replete with cabinets full of artefacts and speci-
mens of nature, archives and a modern library, laboratory equipment,
microscopes, and telescopes, this 'Palace of Wisdom' (*Saraswati Mahal*)
boasted the latest in scientifically and technologically advanced apparatus.

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   [19] Indira Viswanathan Peterson, 'The Cabinet of King Serfoji of Tanjore: A European Collec-
tion in Early Nineteenth Century India', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 11: 1 (1999), 71–93; and
'Tanjore, Tranquebar, and Halle: European Science and German Missionary Education in the
Lives of Two Indian Intellectuals in the Early Nineteenth Century', in Robert Eric Frykenberg
(ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500* (Grand Rapids,
Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 93–126, originally read at European Conference on Modern Asian
Studies (Copenhagen, 1996).

Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar

The most renowned of all Schwartz's Tamil *Upadesiars* (or Helpers) was Vedanayakam [Pillai] Sastriar. One of the classmates of Serfoji Maharaja, he was born in Palaiyamkottai, down in Tirunelveli. One of several children born to the Vellalar Christian poet Devasahayam Pillai, it was Vedanayakam who caught the eye of Schwartz. He was only 12 years old when in 1785 the ageing missionary happened to be making one of his periodic visits to Tirunelveli and noted the boy's mental aptitude. He immediately asked Vedanayakam's father for permission to adopt the lad as his disciple (*sishiya*) and 'son'. After coming to Thanjavur, Vedanayakam's brilliance soon became increasingly manifest. So much was this so that he eventually became both master-teacher and headmaster of the Thanjavur School, as well as superintendent of other schools then also being established within the kingdoms of Ramnad and Shivaganga.

Vedanayakam's main historical significance, as this was to develop over many years, would ultimately lie in his becoming the most distinguished Tamil writer of the age. Powerful contributions that he made to Tamil literature and, especially, to Tamil Christian thought have remained as a lasting legacy to Tamil culture. Among his productions were masterful works in classical Tamil poetry and equally creative contributions to modern Tamil prose. The entire corpus of this writing, not only in volume, but also in depth, range, and subtlety, as well as range of modern and scientific learning—astronomical, geographical, biological, and such—is astonishing. As Indira Peterson has shown, Vedanayakam became especially famous for his use of the *kuruvanci* genre—'the play about a wandering [woman] soothsayer [or fortuneteller]'. This enabled him to convey profound expositions on fundamental elements underlying human nature in relation to everlasting verities. The *Bethlehem Kurvanchee* was a presentation of the Gospel story in verse.[20]

As Vedanayakam's renown as a Tamil poet and writer increased, it culminated in his being formally recognized as court 'poet-laureate' by the Maharaja. As his old fellow *chela*, Serfoji Maharaja provided his former classmate with a handsome annual stipend, gave him a piece of land on which to build a *pukka* house of his own, and bestowed upon him the title '*Sastri*' to affix to his name. One can imagine the old classmates seeing many of their fondest dreams fulfilled among musty collections of manuscripts

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[20] '*Bethlehem Kuruvañci* Vedanayaka Sastri of Tanjore: The Cultural Discourses of an Early Nineteenth-Century Tamil Christian Poet', in Judith M. Brown et al. (eds.), *Cultural Interactions: Christianity and South Asia's Religious Traditions*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishers, 2002), revision of papers read at conferences (Oxford, Balliol College, 22–24 Sept. 1999; Palaiyamkottai, 6–8 Jan. 1995).

within the Saraswati Mahal. Vedanayakam would live until 1858, outliving his patron by a quarter of a century. The path that he blazed would be pursued, a generation later, by H. A. Krishna Pillai. Pillai, another Tirunelveli native, was also to have an illustrious career. After his conversion, he devoted his life, beyond teaching in one of the model schools of Tirunelveli, to scholarship and writing. His greatest work, the epic *Irakshaniya Vāttirikam*, was a poetic rendering of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Set within a Tamil cultural context, this work demonstrated how Tamils could appropriate Christian truth without doing violence to hallowed modes of classical Tamil literature.

Rasa Clorinda and Sathyanathan Pillai

As early as 1769 and again in 1771, pleas came to Schwartz from Sāvarimuthu Pillai. Sāvarimuthu was a Vellalar Christian sepoy stationed in the Company's garrison at Palaiyamkottai. As leader of a growing Tamil Christian community, he begged Schwartz to send someone to serve as a pastor-teacher. These Christians had settled in the vicinity of a military cantonment, within a domain that was still nominally subject to the Nawab. Shortly thereafter, an affluent Maratha Brahmin Christian widow arrived in Palaiyamkottai with her common-law European spouse, Henry Lyttleton.[21] Whether this sepoy captain had actually rescued her from being burned as a *sati* cannot be confirmed. Whatever was the case, there can be no question of Clorinda's high status, strong personality, personal affluence, and learning. Already a devout believer, she wrote to Schwartz begging him to send a preacher-cum-teacher and to make a personal visit to Palaiyamkottai. When Schwartz finally came down to Palaiyamkottai from Tiruchirapalli in 1778, after baptizing her, he christened her 'Clorinda', and put her in charge of the local congregation. The responsibility she took lasted for a number of years. Occasionally she received help from a visiting 'Helper'. One such *Upadesiar* was a Vellalar preacher named Rayappan. Reports from all itinerant Tamil teacher-preachers described her zeal in sharing the Gospel with local people, especially her influential work among respectable women whom she invited to her own home. When her further pleas for a permanent pastor failed to bring results, she herself made a costly and hazardous trip to Thanjavur in 1783 during a time of war. Among those who accompanied her palanquin were Pitchaimuttu, a renowned

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[21] A. Madhaviah, *Clarinda: A Historical Novel* (Tirunelveli: Nambar Vattam, 1915; 2nd edn. 1992). This translation of a Tamil novel romanticizes historical events. Yet, despite unfounded distortions, many of them inserted in order to demonstrate an anti-colonial fervour, this work acutely and accurately contextualizes events.

Hannan physician who had recently turned Christian, and two 'Roman Christians'.[22] As a result of this visit to Thanjavur, two other Schwartz 'Helpers'—Visvasu and then Gnanapragasam—accompanied her to Palaiyamkottai. Finally, in 1785, after she herself had opened her own 'charity school' and had personally provided funds to endow the building of a *pukka* 'prayer/school hall', Schwartz made another visit to Tirunelveli— to see things for himself and, on her plea, to dedicate her new building.

As a result of this visit, Sathyanathan Pillai was sent to serve as the first full-fledged and permanent resident pastor-teacher (*Upadesiar*) or 'Helper' to care for all congregations and schools in Palaiyamkottai and the surrounding Tirunelveli countryside. Sathyanathan Pillai, who came from a well-off, albeit non-Christian Vellalar family of Thanjavur, had joined Schwartz and been trained for the mission over the strong objections and determined opposition of his own family. He had accompanied Schwartz to Thanjavur. There he had served as pastor-teacher of the Tamil Evangelical congregation within the Company's military garrison at Vallam, on the outskirts of the city. But after Company forces had destroyed the 'prayer hall' of the city congregation within Thanjavur itself, he had gone to become pastor to the city congregation. Having served in this position for a number of years, one can understand why Schwartz had initially been somewhat reluctant to allow such a worthy veteran 'Helper' to go so far away. Of special importance to the progress of Sathyanathan had been his ability to relate himself 'to the mobility of Christians, and especially of Kallam and Vellalar Christian soldiers in the armies of the Company and their local allies'.[23] But, in the years that followed, as the value of his contributions and his growing stature among Christians in the Tirunelveli congregation became more and more evident, he was recalled to Thanjavur for the purpose of being explicitly and formally commissioned. In 1790, Sathyanathan became the first fully ordained Tamil Evangelical missionary. He was joined a year later by Joseph Daniel Jänicke. But this saintly missionary who came to help rapidly growing congregations was soon disabled by chronic 'fevers'. Yet, until his death in 1800, he not only gave timely encouragement to his Tamil brother, but also left a remarkable record of the 'amazing' and 'awesome' events that occurred and the movement began to gain momentum.[24] Together with Clorinda, these gifted individuals laid the foundations for the extraordinary mass movement of conversions that began to break out in Tirunelveli country between 1797 and 1799.

[22] Robert Caldwell, *Records of the Early History of Christianity in Tinnevelly (REH)*, (Madras, 1881), 16.

[23] Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, i. 53.

[24] *Memoirs of Joseph Daniel Jaenicke, Interspersed with Many Original Letters and Notices of Schwartz* (London, 1833).

Chinnamuttu Sundaranandam David

The catalyst for the movement was Chinnamuttu Sundaranandam David. This disciple of Schwartz was a Shanar (aka Nadar). After conversion and training in Thanjavur, his fiery energy, gifts, and zeal had so impressed the then ageing and failing Schwartz that, in 1797, he was sent back to Palaiyamkottai to assist Sathyanathan Pillai. At his birthplace of Kalangudi, relatives who had long given him up for dead could hardly believe their eyes when Sundaranandam David appeared in their midst and told them about the wonders of his conversion and subsequent rise to a position of leadership. Electrified by his words, his entire extended family quickly embraced the new faith and asked for a school of their own. At Vijayaramapuram, not far away from Kalangudi, four extended families also asked for instruction. Soon families at Shanmugampuram, and other surrounding villages came for conversion. Eventually many hundreds turned to the new faith. He seems to have died in 1806, perhaps under suspicious circumstances: there is no further mention of him in the records.[25] Controversy seems to have surrounded his last days: he is alleged to have raised a brigade of club-men, or *tadi-kambukarar*, to defend new Christian communities.

   In the face of massive persecutions that then descended upon these new Christian communities many kinds of imaginative inventions and innovations had to be developed in order for these Christians to survive. While these events are described more fully in Chapter 8, suffice to indicate here that, among the most revolutionary innovations, were the evolution of 'villages of refuge', voluntary cooperative societies for mutual aid and care, and agencies to provide shelter to any refugees fleeing homes from which they had been forcibly ejected. As numbers of Christians in each locality doubled and sometimes tripled in each succeeding decade of the century that followed, new missionaries arrived from Europe. These missionaries helped to develop institutional infrastructures: more and better schools so as to provide basic universal literacy, colleges and seminaries to train leaders, dispensaries and hospitals and self-help or welfare societies to care for the sick, the poor, the widows and orphans. By such means Tirunelveli Christians, with forms of worship that had Pietistic German (Lutheran) roots, profoundly transformed the entire local culture and society.[26]

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[25] D. A. Christudoss, *Muthiam Erathasachi Thaveethu Sundaranandam* [First Martyr David Sundaranandam] (Palaiyamkottai: n.p., 1976), 64.

[26] R. E. Frykenberg, 'The Impact of Conversion and Social Reform upon Society in South India during the Late Company period: Questions Concerning Hindu–Christian Encounters, with Special Reference to Tinnevelly', in C. H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright (eds.), *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation: c.1830–1850* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1978), 187–243.

Maharasan Vedamanickam of Mayiladi, Travancore

What happened in Tirunelveli was replicated in southern Travancore, first among Shanars (aka Nadars). This was led by Maharasan Vedamanickam of Mayiladi. With crucial infrastructural help from missionaries of Tranquebar and Thanjavur, this movement was then spread among other communities of Travancore during the first half of the nineteenth century. What happened can be seen as a further continuation of the legacy of those who were the disciples (*chelas* or *sishiyas*) of Schwartz and his predecessors whose work in India had begun with the arrival of Ziegenbalg in 1706. The details of what happened among subjects of Tiruvanthapuram's Maharaja are just as fascinating and instructive as those already described. They replicate and confirm what had already occurred concerning the crucial role of missionaries as *dubashis*—two-way cultural conduits of information, change agents, or go-betweens who interpreted one culture to and for another culture and who institutionalized infrastructures that ensured continuity of processes previously set in motion.

Within Kerala society also, indigenously led mass movements arose among such lowly communities as Pulaiyars and Paraiyars who had long lived in conditions of abject thraldom. These later movements would not have occurred had not Maharasan Vedamanickam himself been carefully encouraged, tutored, and then reinforced by strenuous efforts of two individuals. One was Johann Caspar Kohlhoff. An India-born German missionary brought up and trained by Schwartz, as well as a classmate of Serfoji and Vedanayakam, he remained in Thanjavur for his entire life, continuing to strengthen infrastructures there for nearly forty more years after the death of his teacher. The other was Wilhelm Tobias Ringeltaube. He too was a German missionary who, after misadventures while under the London Missionary Society (LMS), was then trained in Thanjavur and Tranquebar by Kohlhoff alongside Maharasan Vedamanickam. Later known as 'Ringeltaube the Rishi', this missionary spent a number of years working with Vedamanickam in Travancore, often without adequate financial or moral support. In each case, a period of incubation after initial infrastructures were first established by missionary *dubashis* occurred before explosive movements of mass conversion took place among Izhavas and Nadars, as well as lowly Pulaiyars, Paraiyars, and other peoples.

Conclusion

A glimpse at the foundation laid by the Tranquebar Mission, and the processes engendered thereby, first by the work of such pioneers as Ziegenbalg, Schultz, and Fabricius and later by Schwartz and his coterie of disciples, known as 'Pilgrims' or 'Helpers' or *Upadesiars*, especially such

leaders as Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar, Sathyanathan Pillai, and Sundar-anandam David, as well as by Rasa ('Royal' or Rani) Clorinda, serves to show exactly how it was that cultural *dubashis*, as 'go-betweens' or 'intermediaries', functioned and how, after lengthy periods of enculturation and incubation, numbers of new local Christian communities rapidly increased and multiplied. Instruments and infrastructures first developed in Halle were transplanted in Tranquebar and Thanjavur, and finally in Tirunelveli and Travancore. What occurred provides us with a template by which to assess structures that would, in due time, profoundly influence virtually all later generations of Christian work in various places and among various peoples throughout the entire continent.

The central argument in this chapter is this: that the functions and roles of *dubashi* Christians, whether they were Europeans or Native Indians, were—essentially, inherently, and intrinsically—infrastructural. This means that, despite rhetorical claims to the contrary by adversaries of Christian missionary movements in India, their task was always relatively humble. As conduits for the spreading of information or the increasing of new knowledge, they were often beset with adversities, brutalities, and challenges of every kind. *Dubashi* missionaries, both European and Indian, were but intermediary agents. As such, they could rarely let themselves forget that they were little more than 'earthen vessels'—and often rather broken or cracked vessels at that. As little more than leaking conduits, they understood that they themselves could not, by themselves, bring about any large-scale movements of conversion nor bring to light any startlingly new scientific discoveries. Achievements of such consequence might have been dreamt about; but such consequences were, of necessity, largely beyond their capacities—and out of their hands. Larger events, stemming indirectly from their efforts, would come from the initiatives of later generations and mainly from an indigenous, albeit parallel stream of *dubashi* agents, almost all of whom were Indian. Finally, European missionaries and their Indian partners, as *dubashis*, invariably functioned as 'double agents'. As such, because of this double or janus-faced function, they were bound to perceive that they could never be a fully faithful part of either India or Europe. Their very function, as *dubashis*, made this so, to a greater or lesser degree.

Especially important for later developments was the attempt by missionary *dubashis* to bring literacy in the 'mother tongue access' to the humblest folk. But no less important, at the same time, such conduits enabled the possibility of a reciprocal process of providing access to raw research data drawn from natural phenomena. This, specifically in various forms of freshly recorded descriptions of biological, geological, and meteorological, not to mention cultural, social, political, and historical observations, served as a

stimulus for the benefit of scientific advancement among Enlightenment thinkers in the West.

Among persons drawn into Christian congregations by the Native 'Helpers' or *Upadesiars*, Bishop Heber estimated that, by the time that Schwartz died in 1798, his disciples were serving as pastors and teachers for over 6,000 Christians. Among such people, living in villages due south and south-east of the city of Thanjāvur, were the Kallans. Kallans were a distinctive but despised people. Known for their hereditary skill as thieves and robbers, a profession that they had considered to be their sacred duty, they somehow became attracted by the work of missionary 'Helpers'. Despite their thieving past, they turned Christian in wholesale groups. By the time of Schwartz's death, some 2,800 of them were thriving within Christian congregations scattered across the Thanjavur kingdom.[27] That they should have done this during times of ceaseless war, famine, and human suffering is noteworthy. More remarkable still, numbers of Christian conversions increased in the face of opposition from officials of the English East India Company. Even as the Company, with its Indian allies, was inexorably extending its sway over the subcontinent, its governments remained officially opposed to Christian missionary activities, especially within their own expanding territories. Reasons for such a policy lay both within the inner structures of the Company's Indian manpower base, much of which was Brahman, and within the Company's boardrooms in London, where profit margins were dictated by bottom lines of commercial consideration.

Yet, it is also important to note that few if any actions that turned different local communities in the direction of Christian faith, including Evangelical/Pietist Christian faith, can be attributed directly to efforts made by foreign missionaries themselves. Time and time again, as we shall see described in more detail in other chapters, infrastructures that missionaries helped to build served this purpose; but usually only after a period of thirty to fifty years' incubation. Then, an explosion of spiritual energy among local Christians would inspire local leaders to bring the new message to their own people and to do so in their own native (mother) tongue. What was introduced into their own language of faith by local people who had previously become converts and had then brought their new faith with them to their homes occasionally resulted in a mass movement. It was the adventurous and gifted few, individuals who had travelled far away from their own home villages, who became indigenous *dubashis*. It was they who returned with a new vocabulary and made the most profound impact upon people in their own homelands.

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[27] J. Richter, *A History of Missions in India* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1908), 127.

If there is a single verity that every serious foreign missionary had to discover and internalize, sometimes painfully, it was this: that, while they could encourage, evangelize, teach, or train local individuals or small groups, they could go only so far and could go no further than to provide elements out of which a more truly indigenous form of Christianity would emerge. Christians in India, in the end and by common consensus, could not be anything but profoundly Indian. It was they who appropriated new cultures and convictions. It was they whose conversions turned previous ways of life upside down, even if only for themselves. After a period of incubation, processes of Christianization initiated in the time of Ziegenbalg and Schwartz, as also in earlier times of Francis Xavier and Roberto de Nobili, continued to spread and gain momentum. In our own day, missionary *dubashis*—estimated to number between 40,000 and 100,000—are all native-born Indians; and the infrastructures they are building as never before may, after a period of incubation, also result in explosive new movements in the future. But, whether Evangelical or Catholic, the appropriations of Christian cultures, largely indigenous in character, are also being propelled by peoples, both as individuals and as groups, from within the continent itself.

Photographs of the following early Evangelical Protestant churches can be found in the plate section:
New Jerusalem (Evangelical/Pietist) Church, Tranquebar (1718). Plate 9.
St Peter's (Evangelical) Church, Thanjavur (*c*.1781). Plate 10.
Clorinda's Prayer/School Hall, Palaiyamkottai, Tirunelveli (1785). Plate 11.

INDIA'S RAJ AND POLITICAL LOGIC:
THE UNIFICATION OF INDIA,
A SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVE

Within the history of Christianity, as shown in previous chapters or as can be learned from the history of Christianity in other lands, the nature of political authority and its exercise have been of crucial consequence. A process of political unification, and of socio-cultural integration, began to gain momentum in the middle of the eighteenth century. By the early decades of the nineteenth century this process began to reach unprecedented levels of strength. The importance of this process for understanding the expansion of Christianity can hardly be ignored. For this reason, it is important to explain how this unification took place and what forces and logic drove this process, especially in southern India, where most of the history of Christianity took place.

Prior to the nineteenth century, no single and all-embracing political system, ruling over all peoples and all regions, had ever held sway over the whole continent (or subcontinent). On two or three occasions in ancient times, large dynastic empires such as those of the Mauryas and Guptas (c.300 BC and AD 300) or of Varsha Vardhana (c.700), had encompassed territories of the Indo-Gangetic plain from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal and had even penetrated the Deccan. The Turkish Sultanate of Delhi briefly reached as far south as Madurai during the early fourteenth century before soon retreating to the north, leaving behind the short-lived Sultanate of Madurai. Rulers of Vijayanagara then brought together all of the peninsula south of the Raichur Doab and the Krishna River. The sway of Vijayanagara, as a front-line power fending off the Deccan sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda, loosened in the sixteenth century and all but vanished after defeat at the battle of Talikota in 1565. This event left subordinate Nayak lords to rule, rather loosely, over their local princely domains. Meanwhile, just sixteen years after the Portuguese took Goa in 1510, Babur's forces triumphed on the field of Panipat and Mughals supplanted the Lodhi sultans of Delhi and Agra. Babur's gifted grandson Akbar was successful in consolidating and extending Mughal sway throughout North India. By the end of the seventeenth

century, the sway of Akbar's great-grandson Aurangzeb was being under-mined by the Marathas and other princes in the south.

Reasons why, prior to modern times, no single system of political power ever succeeded in bringing all of the continent and its peoples under the rule of a single imperium are to be found within cultural, social, religious, and political complexities and dynamics of the continent itself. As already pointed out in Chapter 1, between hundreds, if not thousands, of ethnically distinct respectable castes (*jātis*), intermarriage or interdining had not been acceptable. Intricate mosaics and networks of segmented and tightly stratified social structure and political power made the task of bringing all of India under one umbrella so difficult to achieve that processes of disintegration and fragmentation tended to undermine processes of political integration and unification. How and why such obstacles to political integration were overcome are the theme of this chapter. In what follows, an attempt is made to explain how fissiparous forces, tendencies, and traditions were gradually reversed and how this was done by means and methods, manpower and money, that were a hybrid of indigenous and foreign influences. Explanations are sought by looking mainly at countervailing historical processes from below, rather than from above—a 'bottom-up' rather than a 'top-down' perspective—and by concentrating more attention upon a single 'core' zone located in the south, far from the historic core zones of empire in North India or in Bengal and far from arid and broken 'shatter' zones such as those of the Deccan plateau. The puzzle of how hundreds and thousands of separate socio-political segments—'small hard pieces'[1]—could be cemented together into larger structures of stability and durability is very old, and has challenged creative political thinkers since ancient times.[2]

Metaphors and Paradigms

Within any powerful family or dynasty, especially one that was very old and strong, intricately choreographed dynamics of support and tension, alliance

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[1] Robert H. Wiebe, *The Segmented Society: An Historical Preface to the Meaning of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. x: 'What segmentation denotes is a configuration of small social units—primary circles of identity, values, associations and goals—that have sufficient authority to dominate the terms of their most important relationships.' Special, separate communities, ranging over time and space—settlements with ethnic, religious, and other grounds for existence—later mingled with other kinds of affiliations and associations of 'common interest'. Units of kinship and occupation, occupying space through time, constituted the very distinctive and primary blocks out of which a highly pluralistic and segmented society has been built.

[2] R. E. Frykenberg, 'Traditional Processes of Power and Administration in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1: 2 (Oct.–Dec. 1963), 1–21. This is a puzzle that has fascinated the author for the past fifty years.

and antipathy, could often be traced back into the mists of antiquity. Principles that explained political relationships within and between villages, as micro-principalities, can be found in ancient lore and writings. Bonds of primal loyalty and appeals to patriotism or fealty often reached no further than the walls of one's own habitation and no further than non-polluting kith and kin. Larger political entities, such as kingdoms and empires, could come and go, but 'little domains' and their rulers survived. Adroit diplomacy and tokens of propitiation, resistance, and submission enabled 'small hard pieces' not only to avoid extinction but even to actually thrive. Techniques for survival were closely held secrets passed down from generation to generation. In axiomatic terms, durability of a regime was inversely proportional to size; or, conversely, the larger a political system was, the shorter was its longevity.

Within Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, as well as within the *Danda Niti* and *Sukra Niti*, countervailing principles of political logic became enshrined. Each deployed a metaphor, one animate and another inanimate or abstract, to explain basic principles of political logic that applied to processes of integration or disintegration. But neither *matsyanyāya*, the 'logic of fish', nor the *mandala-nyāya*, the 'logic of circles', could be understood apart from the other. The one emphasized the animate logic of brutality and ruthlessness to explain relations between entities of unequal size, resources, and/or strength. The other explained the cold logic of balanced rationality, emphasizing care and dexterity in the exercise of relations between political entities of equal size and strength. Where one declared that 'A larger fish must a smaller eat; and a smaller still a smaller gobble, and so on *ad infinitum*', the other declared that 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend; and the friend of my enemy is my enemy, and so forth!' Each axiom enshrined a principle that defined how entities of relative size and strength were to be approached. Where possibilities for success were uncertain, care had to be exercised; but where relative strength was certain, decisive action was mandatory, either in exercises of sanction (*danda*) or of submission. By such reasoning, larger imperial structures could never come into existence or remain strong if they did not carefully consider and weigh the odds of various dialectical lessons to be found within this double logic.

Seen from this perspective, any kind of village polity—and there were hundreds of varieties of such polities—could itself be characterized as a micro-system of power. Each was a small wheel or *chakra* within which there was a central hub of lordship that could not function without proper support from lesser entities or communities located both in its rim and also in balancing intermediate communities that served as 'spokes' between the hub and the rim. No one of these castes, or ethnic spokes, could by itself be expected to either supplant the hub or to link the rim to the hub. Pollution

rules hindered the melding of all communities into a common 'public'. Only by careful contractual arrangements and controlled tensions, re-inforced by long-established and well-oiled means of applying conventions and ancient customs (*mamool*),[3] could any one dominant elite bring non-elite and servile peoples into alignments of common defence and domestic order. Each micro-polity, or village, was a small universe in itself, a tiny empire quite distinct from many other tiny empires.

This paradigm of a 'small hard piece' or a 'little empire' also posited external relations with other micro-polities (or village principalities), as also with larger regional kingdoms, and still larger imperial entities. Given the fact that some surrounding villages could be alien and hostile, often ruled by families from other castes that were of questionable ritual purity, relations between political entities of roughly equal size and strength called for extreme dexterity in balancing the cost benefits of waging diplomacy instead of war. Through diplomacy, adroit alliances, and coalitions, it was possible for larger combinations or 'circles' or villages to form even larger 'wheels of power' (*chakras*) that combined many 'small hard pieces' and welded them into a still larger political entity (*mahachakra*). The inner structures or 'spokes' of these larger circles or spheres had to be as carefully balanced and controlled in their internal arrangements, in ways comparable to how such things had been done in micro-polities. External relationships of power, in other words, were comparable to those which constituted the inner logic of power within each village itself, or within any domain, whatever its size and strength. In this respect, structures of larger wheels very much could and, indeed, often did resemble the structures of the smaller wheels (*chakras*) that were micro-domains or villages.

The traditional modality was one in which any political structure, whether small or great, could be described as an elaborately constructed spoked wheel (*chakra*) or circle/sphere (*mandala*). By this metaphorical representation of systems of power, with successively larger systems of structured political domination, those who were politically astute could explain how each larger wheel or *mahachakra* was itself a rational construc-tion composed of many smaller wheels, and wheels within wheels, each of them serving different functions within the larger wheel. Entities on the peripheral extremities served as parts within the larger wheel's rim; and those providing structural or connecting support between smaller wheels within the rim and the ruling hub also served as conduits through which material and moral resources so essential for the vitality of any larger political machine could flow. In short, the logic of *mandala-nyāya*[4]—the 'logic of

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[3] An Arabic word commonly used, and still prevalent.

[4] John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India: A Study of Kingship from the Earliest Times to circa A.D. 300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 156–9.

circles' (or 'spheres')—sought to define predictable relations between political entities of comparable size and strength, between any one given circle and forty other circles, or degrees of potential support and/or tension. This intricate pattern also described conditions of constant and sustained relations within tightly stretched networks linking countless 'small, hard pieces'. Such tightly stretched networks of local power also defined predictable relations of war and peace—or, to put it differently, permanent conditions of non-war and non-peace. Such relationships, in ideal terms, could so precisely arrange relations of power that, even when local tensions occasionally spilled over into open rapine and violence, there were ways to restore equilibrium, by means of appeal to local customs, conventions, or precedents for arbitration and negotiation. Here, in short, was a model similar to what Robert Wiebe used to describe segmented societies in America. Here was 'a web of tensions, an intricate arrangement of accommodations to stress and conflict, capable of rapidly registering each sharp tug across its entire network [so as to] resist collapse even when large portions of the web were damaged'.[5] Such a situation served to remind one and all that any change in one set of relations could affect the equilibrium of all. *Mandala-nyāya* was an ancient logic—a way of explaining relations of power. No rational system for integrating all political entities into a single 'Great Wheel' or *Mahachakra* that did not follow its rules could hope to succeed or remain durable for long. This pattern of traditional inter- and intra-village political relationships is also still often very much in evidence. Lords of villages and their families, or, conversely, coalitions of village notables who sit in councils or *panchayats* where no single person or family is dominant, still preside over the destinies of village domains and over inhabitants who dwell in such places and who still struggle to determine the nature of their relations with 'outside' powers of the modern state.

Pre-modern Systems of Power

The Coromandel—'Chola Mandalam'—specifically that coastal area later known as Madras (aka Chennai), had supported a well-developed plethora of 'small hard pieces' long before the English arrived. Resting on a substratum of agrarian life were concentrations of thriving villages, towns, and hamlets. Immediately surrounding them were paddy fields, gardens, orchards or groves, beyond which were empty spaces inhabited by darker, wilder, and more polluted beings. The antiquity of this 'core' area can be understood by looking at the megaliths of Mahabalipuram, the endowed temple-complex lands (*agraharams*) of Mylapore, and the tomb of St Thomas.

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[5] Wiebe, *The Segmented Society*, p. x.

Historical understanding of this highly developed and relatively 'balanced' agrarian system, as analysed by Burton Stein and a coterie of historians (including this writer) during the past fifty years, has helped to revise our thinking about how such systems were structured and how they functioned.[6] Drawing attention to ecological factors, distinguishing between dry uplands of the interior that gave lower yields and supported modest forces, and wet lowlands with sophisticated irrigation systems that permitted high yields but also required high labour intensity, these scholars argued that such factors could explain distinctions between relatively 'shallow' and 'steep' socio-economic and cultural hierarchies within two ecological areas. Clustering and density of agrarian settlement were linked ecologically: widely spaced and light settlement of land areas was contrasted with more concentrated settlements in irrigated lowland plains and deltas. Lowland concentrations of power, known as *periyanadus*, consisted of elite communities of dominant castes, each enjoying relatively large measures of autonomy and power over their own resources and ruling over a steeply descending hierarchy of 'lower orders' of castes. Within *periyanadus* ('great domains') of concentrated development, three categories of separate elites found mutual reinforcement and symbiosis.[7] Paramount among these 'small hard pieces' would be communities of agrarian farmer-warriors. These lords of the lowland domains were Vellalars. In Telugu areas further north, these lords were Velamas, with Reddis being lords of the higher, drier areas. Such elites were reinforced in their agrarian strongholds by elites in adjacent domains that provided ritual and commercial benefits. Ritual domains were headed by specialists, consisting of priests, poets, and/or scholars. After the decline of Buddhist and Jain influence, these were increasingly Brahman or Vellalar. Commercial centres were headed by merchant bankers and traders from various Baniya (or Vaniya) castes, such as Chettiars, Komartis, Sethis, or Linga–Baligas. Each of these separate clusters of corporate life within a *periyanadu* enjoyed considerable autonomy. Each also tended to be in a state of perpetual tension in relations with the others. *Periyanadu* areas were loosely joined together into larger spheres (*mandalams*); and these, in turn, were linked to still greater realms to which, in varying degrees, all 'small hard pieces' of power would acknowledge fealty.

[6] The high-water mark of this historiography was Stein's *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980); and his 'The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historiographical Critique', in Burton Stein (ed.), *Essays on South India*, Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. IS (Honolulu: Vikas, 1975).

[7] Brian J. Murton, 'Geography and the Study of South India', in Stein, *Essays on South India*, 92–120 and 'Land and Class: Cultural, Social, and Biophysical Integration in Interior Tamil Nadu in the Late Eighteenth Century', in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia* (Madison: Orient Longmans, 1977), 81–99.

This fealty, even if only nominal, required paying homage to this or that 'ancient' royal overlord or royal deity in whose fortress–citadel–temple-palace worship was due.[8]

Tondaiyamandalam, first developed in ancient times by Vellalar lords, was one of the names for a structured system of *periyanadus*—the epicentre of one of the great 'core' *mandalams* of South India.[9] Further south were the ancient *mandalam* domains of the Cheras, Cholas, and Pandiyas. Tondaiya-mandalam, with its segmented networks of finely balanced local power, never resembled any entity that might fit the description of a 'state'—that is, something territorially integrated, with defined boundaries and sophisti-cated structures of administration as defined by law. Political entities within this area, by contrast, consisted of a congruent juxtaposition of: (1) centres of royal, ritual, or regional power; (2) patterns of perpetual plundering and warfare or tightly stylized struggles for status and supremacy, at every level or every size of territorial power; (3) substantial levels of agricultural and commercial surplus, over which competing powers fought for spoils or extracted tribute; and (4) uninterrupted expansion of pilgrimage, sectarian, and temple activity.[10]

This kind of agrarian system, ruled by ethnic elites who rendered nominal allegiance to various royal dynasties and their deities, both within deltic wet zones and less densely populated upland dry zones of agriculture and trade, suffered repeated shocks from AD 1330 onwards. Predatory Indo-Turkish armies coming from the north were followed by predatory Telugu-speaking and Kannada-speaking forces under warlords who emulated the military technologies of the Turks. These were followed by further predatory sultanate forces from the Deccan who fought against each other for control

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[8] Burton Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian System of South India', in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), and Burton Stein, 'The Segmentary State in South Indian History', in R. G. Fox (ed.), *Realm and Region in Traditional* India (Durham, NC: Duke University, Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia [Monograph and Occasional Papers Series, No. 141], 1977), 3–51.

[9] An excellent early description of Tondaiyamandalam's history is found in F. W. Ellis's Report (2 Aug. 1814), in C. P. Brown (ed.), *Three Treatises on Mirasi Right* (Madras, 1852), 51–66; K. S. Vaidyanathan, 'Ancient Geographical Divisions of Tamil Nadu', in *Handbook of World International Conference—Seminar of Tamil Studies* (Madras, 1968), 231–7; and Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Chola Country* (Madras: State Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, 1973).

[10] George W. Spencer, 'The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh Century Ceylon', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 35 (May 1976), 405–19; 'Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 12: 1 (1969), 42–57; 'The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Shaivite Hymns', *International Review of the History of Religion*, 17 (Dec. 1970), 232–44; 'Temple Money-Lending and Livestock Redistribution in Early Tanjore', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 5 (1968), 277–93. Also see Arjun A. Appadurai, 'Kings, Sects, and Temples in South India, 1350–1700 A.D.', and Burton Stein, 'Temples in Tamil Country, 1300–1750 A.D.', in Burton Stein (ed.), *South Indian Temples: An Analytical Reconsider-ation* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), 11–74.

over productive resources. Yet, these blows, while damaging, did not destroy the older agrarian systems. Each wave of fresh conquest from the north merely superimposed another stratum of tribute-extracting, essentially parasitic relationships. Across the tightened networks of perpetual tension and 'suspended sovereignties' local warlords rose and fell as they sought to extract a maximum of spoils from these older settlements and to extend their spheres of influence and operations at the expense of rival warlords. Newer warrior-dominated domains—known as *kavalams*, *ammrams*, and *pallaiyams*—each signifying a larger aggregation of 'small hard pieces', each with its own satellite temple centres, trading towns, and fortresses, acquired markedly different internal properties, qualities, and styles. When subdued, warbands, under their respective lords (*doragarus*, *kavalgarus*, and *polaiygarus*), would be drawn together by regional overlords, who were known as *nayakas*. As these various kinds of local warlords were subdued, they offered qualified fealty and tribute to the greatest super-overlord of all, the monarch who reigned, seated upon a imperial cushion (*gadi*), within the great city of Vijayanagara. Yet, perhaps only under the reign of Krishna-Deva-Raya (1509–29) did some measure of relative equilibrium and tranquillity seem to become established—and then only for a very limited time.[11]

After the battle of Talikota in 1565, this equilibrium was destroyed and Vijayanagara went into a permanent and irreversible decline. Disintegration of various of the great Nayaka domains of the former Vijayanagara imperium followed during the next century, resulting in a rise of further local tension and strife, not unmixed with occasional terror.[12] The southward movement of new predatory warbands, led by Maratha and Muslim commanders, upset whatever larger balance remained. This, in turn, produced a series of contests within the western and eastern Deccan—within Bijapur-Karnataka and Golconda-Karnataka domains—and within the newly conquered lands further to the south. Between upstart newcomers and families of older warlords in each locality, permutating combinations of local power incessantly formed and dissolved. By the mid-seventeenth century, Nayaka dominance remained strong only in Mysore and Madurai. Maratha rulers established themselves at Thanjavur (Tanjore) by 1675. Mughal penetrations into the deep south, following raids begun a century earlier, culminated with the fall of Bijapur and Golconda in 1686–7 to the armies of the Emperor (*Padishah*) Aurangzeb. During the eighteenth century, as

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[11] Frykenberg, 'Traditional Processes of Power and Administration in South India', 122–42; reprinted in revised edition of R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (New Delhi, 1980).

[12] David Shulman, 'On South Indian Bandits and Kings', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 17: 3 (July–Sep. 1980), 283–306; and V. Narayana Rao and J. F. Richards, 'Banditry in Mughal India: Historical and Folk Perspectives', ibid. (Jan.–Mar. 1980), 95–120.

underlords threw off the yokes of their overlords and as warband turned against warband, a pattern of struggle, tension, and warfare engulfed the peninsula.

Interpretations such as this, resting on inscriptional and literary evidences which began to be amassed in the nineteenth century, continue to be revised. The missionary scholar Robert Caldwell, over 120 years ago, in commenting on the political history beyond the fortified walls of strong villages in the Tirunelveli region, concluded: 'war seems to have been the normal condition . . . of Southern India from the beginning of man's abode in these regions . . . Incessant depredations, worse under the Nayakas than under the Pandiyas, worse still under the rule of the Nawab, and worst of all—as night is at its darkest before dawn—during the period immediately before the Nawab's power had become merely nominal and the only real power that survived was that of the fierce poligars [*palaiyagarus*] and avaricious 'renters'.'[13]

While this view seems exaggerated, it does convey some sense of the insecurity and turmoil that had engulfed the land, as has been found in various sources. It is worth bearing in mind that there would have been no reason for so much warfare had there been nothing to fight over. Given the remarkable irrigation systems that had been developed and rich alluvial soils of the great river deltas, not to mention the flourishing commerce carried on along the shores during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one can reasonably surmise that, however much warfare took place, this occurred over the heads of toiling peoples. Thus, while 'small hard pieces' continued to flourish, the labour of landless 'soil slaves' produced varying amounts of wealth.

Baniya Company and Kompanee Bahadur

It was into just such tightly stretched networks of segmented and stratified tension and 'warfare' that agents of the English East India Company entered in the seventeenth century.[14] It was one more tiny element of local power and influence—one more 'small hard piece'—within the larger mosaic of local spheres (*mandalams*) and larger kingdoms and Mughal provinces (*subahs*). It is hardly noteworthy that, by the time of their arrival, Portuguese strongholds, especially Malacca and Colombo, were falling to the Dutch; and Dutch stations soon stretched from the Cape of Good Hope almost as far as Japan. Unlike the Portuguese, neither the Dutch nor the English were

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[13] *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevelly in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1881), 299.

[14] Susan Margaret Neild, 'Madras: The Growth of a Colonial City in India, 1780–1840' (University of Chicago, unpublished diss., 1977), 390 (1).

initially or even primarily concerned with gaining dominion. Organized as companies of merchants, their main interest lay in trading of goods and making profits. The Dutch East India Company (VOC), as an arm of the Dutch state, was initially much stronger than the English. With scant support from home, the small, privately owned English company, granted a charter on 31 December 1599, struggled against heavy odds for its very survival. Competition was too severe; and the risks too great. No Muslim ports to the north, neither in Surat, nor Hugli, nor Masulipatam, provided a congenial access to unimpeded enterprise.[15] Nor did the island archipelagos further south and east, where the Dutch, after driving out the Portuguese in 1609, would brook no competition. Thus, after they had suffered bullying and humiliation that climaxed with the Massacre of Amboyna in 1623, the English all but left the spice islands to the Dutch and fell back onto the continental mainland.[16]

The key to English survival was to lie in cotton fabrics rather than spices. The Coromandel had been famous since Roman times for its fine fabrics. Local Indian merchants, such as the Tamil Nattakottai Chettiars and Telugu Komartis, introduced the English to an already booming business. All around the Indian Ocean, many different kinds and qualities and colours and patterns of cotton, as well as silk, hand-woven fabrics—such as 'chintz', 'calico', 'muslin', 'pintado', or 'batik' (handpainted fabrics), as well as superb plain cottons—were in high demand. English traders made contracts with merchants along the Coromandel coast. These acted as middlemen, making local arrangements with separate spinning, weaving, and dyeing communities for the production of cloth. Each year, the English advanced money, in the form of gold and silver specie. This 'investment' covered the costs of production. English ships would then carry these goods, in the form of cotton textiles of different kinds, up and down the coasts of Asia and Africa, bartering or selling their cargoes of cloth goods in exchange for whatever local commodities might be of value for trade elsewhere along these same coasts.

What made it possible for the English to succeed within this already ancient and highly competitive 'country trade' was efficiency of scale. This enabled them to thrive on smaller margins of profit. Their ever larger ships

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[15] J. N. Das Gupta, *India in the Seventeenth Century* (Calcutta, 1916), 136–202. Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605–1690: A Study of the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 145. W. H. Moreland (ed.), *Relations of Golconda in the Early Seventeenth Century* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1931), pp. x–xlix. Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600–1800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 49, 64–78.

[16] Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*. William Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade* (London: A. & C. Black, 1933; 1967 reprint), 276–9.

could carry many times more than ships had ever before carried, so that the cloth they sold was marginally less costly. In return for textiles, ever larger English ships collected gold and silver coming from America via the Philippines as well as China, various kinds of precious stones (e.g. diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, jade, pearls, from Burma and Ceylon), together with porcelain, silks, satins, pepper (and other spices), sandalwood, teak, ebony, camphor, sulphur, tea, coffee, and many other valuable commodities, including slaves. Gold and silver so acquired covered the annual 'investment' needed for cloth manufacture in India. Other items were traded off along the coasts until fleets with bulging holds could sail back to Europe. Margins of profit derived from each exchange of goods were such that English merchants, along with their partners on the Coromandel, including Armenian and many other local communities who joined them, gained more than enough to provide both for the stockholders in London, and for themselves. Nor did it take long to discover a rapidly growing market for hand-woven cotton textiles in Europe.

Thus it was that, in simple terms, bulk carrying trade in cotton cloth that began in Asia eventually transformed customary habits of attire in Europe. Heretofore, the high and mighty had been able to afford fine cloth, and that, mostly linen or Egyptian cotton. Since cotton fabrics from India, in all their varieties, were cheaper, ordinary people could afford cotton finery. As demands for such goods continued to rise, ever larger and larger 'East Indiamen' were built in order to carry enough to meet European demands. In short, the volume of cotton cloth trade from India soon far surpassed that of spices, both in terms of profit and in terms of socio-economic significance. The East India Company reaped such riches that it became known as 'the Fat Lady in Threadneedle Street'. Among English merchants who managed to survive—and many there were who hardly lasted 'two monsoon' seasons—some returned from India with huge fortunes. One former Governor of Madras, Elihu Yale, made enough money to endow a college in the American colonies. Another, Thomas ('Diamond') Pitt, was able to build Chatham House on the south bank of the Thames and to lay the foundations for one of the most noteworthy political families in British history.

But this entire enterprise would never have got off the ground, much less succeeded so spectacularly, had it not been for heavy Indian collaboration. Just as the English had suffered defeat and been all but driven out of the Spice Islands, so also the situation for many Telugu lords had become precarious after the downfall of Vijayanagara in 1565. Ever deeper incursions from forces of Golconda rulers to the north who themselves were being pressed by Mughal armies from still further north, and Maratha forces from the west, imperilled local communities. Thus, under precarious circumstances,

English merchants coming in from the sea and local gentry in the vicinity of what is now Chennai (aka Madras) turned to each other for help. In due course, together they were successful in forming commercial partnerships. As a consequence of mutual weaknesses, the new commercial station with its bastion of Fort St George was opened to all. From its very outset, this largely 'duty-free' seaport permitted and encouraged unrestricted entry and enterprise with a minimum of hindrance or interference from local authorities. Any and all who came to seek shelter within its walls found refuge and opportunity.[17] Losers all, most of them were not strong enough to fully fend for themselves. Little did they dream that the weakness that drove them to collaborate with each other would provide foundations for their long road to imperial power. In the process of forming an informal 'league of losers', they turned weakness into strength—and vast wealth. Eventually ever increasing involvements within ever widening circles of political competition, with alliances that could hardly have been anticipated, led the Company step by step toward rulership over a vast empire.

All of this began quite humbly. A sandy strip of beach five miles long by a mile wide, containing four villages, was 'granted' or 'rented' to the Company's local agents—translations never seem to get such things quite right.[18] A small group of Telugu gentry, local lords from merchant and warrior castes, dealt with a handful of English merchant adventurers. A bargain was struck. On 22 August 1639, Damarla Venkatadri Nayaka and his younger brother Aiyappa Nayaka of Poonamallee agreed with Francis Day, 'Chief Merchant' of *Arumagum*, that merchants of the English Company, or 'Angrezi Kompanee' would be allowed to build a 'castle', for which the Nayaka himself offered to pay (at least at first), and would be fully free to engage in gainful enterprise. Moreover, all who came to live in the new settlement—whether local soldiers or merchants or bankers, or weavers and painters and dyers of cloth, together with artisans and numberless droves of common labourers and other workmen—would be 'forgiven' from paying all taxes and customs duties to the Nayakas for a period of thirty years. All this and much more would be granted in return for a modest yearly rental payment (in hard gold coin). The more powerful Velugoti lords of Kalahasti and Chandragiri soon reinforced the agreement with their own support, going so far as to arrange for a special title deed or treaty to be given to the English. This document, a *sāsanam* inscribed upon gold plate, was actually authorized by Sri Ranga Raya III. The last unfortunate prince to have pretensions to the Vijayanagara throne soon vanished forever into the

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[17] Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*. Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 276–9.
[18] William Foster, *The Founding of Fort St. George* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1920), 1–24. William Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India, 1637–1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. xxxviii–xlii.

Mysore jungles.[19] Finally, to make sure of a medium of exchange that would attract commerce and lend legitimacy and prestige to the new enterprise, coins known as *hūn*, made from purest gold, were struck within the temple, bearing the image of Lord Ventkateshwara, the reigning deity of Tirmalai-Tirupati, eighty miles away. Because of this temple connection, this coin that circulated freely would be called a *pagoda*.

This same pattern was followed in other parts of India. There also the English Company was able to establish itself as a local landed lord. Stations subject to predatory officials or prone to violent attack, such as ports of Surat (Gujarat), Masulipatam (subject to Golconda), and Hugli (Bengal), were avoided. The island of Mumbai (Bombay), on the west coast, was acquired in 1661. One of several wedding gifts to the King of England when he married Catherine of Braganza (in Portugal), Charles II thought it so worthless that he 'rented' it to the Company for £5 sterling per annum. Finally, in 1693, after many troubles with Mughal officials of Bengal, the Company's highly indigenized servant Job Charnock obtained a special grant whereby the Company acquired official standing as a revenue-paying agrarian 'prince', or *zamindar*, under Mughal authority. Through negotiation, the Company gained control of twenty-four small subdistricts (or *parganas*), with full entitlement to govern villages within these domains. The new settlement which rapidly grew up on the mud banks of the Hugli, with its citadel of Fort William, became known as Calcutta (now spelled *Kolkata*). The Company, to repeat, became a titled 'native prince' or agrarian lord in its own right. In the time-honoured traditions of the country, it was now free to dabble in local politics. While most *zamindars* remained no more than 'little kings', some of the great nobles, even kings and emperors, had first begun their political careers as *zamindars*. Persons of ambition, energy, and imagination, given an opportunity, did their best to enhance their positions or expand their domains.

Other important old villages clustered around Fort St George were each gradually drawn into an ever closer and dynamic relationship with the newcomers from Europe. To the original four villages of the settlement—namely, Madraspatnam (Madras 'Coopam'), Chennayaka-patnam (or 'Chennaik Coopam'), Arkoopam, and Meleput—Muthialpettah, Pagada-lupettah, and Peddanayakpettah were soon adjoined. Slightly further away were still wider circles of ancient settlements that soon also entered into individual contractual agreements with the 'Angrezi Kompanee'. Among them were: Tiruottiyur, Nungambakkam, Vyasarapadi, Kattiwakkam, and Sattangadu which became allies in 1708; Egmore and its six adjoining

[19] C. S. Srinivasachari, *History of the City of Madras* (Madras, 1939), 26–36. For more on the career of Sri Ranga Raya, see R. Sathianathaier, *Tamilaham in the 17th Century* (Madras, 1956), 40–8.

hamlets, along with Purusawakkam, and Tondiarpettah, were incorporated in 1721; Saidapettah and Chintadripettah, in 1726 and 1734; Vepery, Perambur, Pudupakkam, Ernavore, and Sadayankuppam, not to mention Nedumbarai, Yerungunrain, and scores more followed. Exactly when San Thome, Triplicane, and Mylapore themselves finally came under Company 'protection' is far from certain, although it is clear that they were closely involved with Fort St George from its very founding.

A gradual process of commercial and political agglomeration and integration—the acquisition and absorption of old villages and the formation of new villages—went on for over a hundred years, and would continue into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What is noteworthy is the fact that hardly one of these ancient places of settled habitation within Greater Madras—each of these 'small, hard pieces'—lost its essential character, or its identity. The inner social fabric and inter-communal constitution of each remained largely intact, with few if any important villages being drastically altered or destroyed. Thus it was that a once sleepy little fishing hamlet of 1639, with hardly twenty rough (*kachcha*) thatched huts, was gradually transformed within a few months into a thriving settlement, with some eight proper (*pukka*), *chunnam* plastered, two-storey houses clustered around a half-constructed fort and a settlement of some 400 families. The growth of the town rapidly accelerated to 10,000 inhabitants within the first decade, and to over 50,000 within another generation. Such rapid expansion cannot be explained in terms of simple 'colonial' domination or exploitation by a few Europeans. By gradual processes of incorporation, with increasing commercial involvement by ever larger numbers of communities, the entire urban complex soon encompassed over a hundred villages, with outlier stations reaching scores if not hundreds of miles into the countryside. Incorporated as socio-political entities within ever wider and more intricate networks of reciprocal relationships with the Governor-in-Council at Fort St George, they constituted a 'city-state' known as 'Madras'. The development of this political system cannot be explained without reference to collaborative arrangements among virtually each and every one of the important communities of the area. Such arrangements included disputes and occasional defeats due to one conflict or another. Such intricate involvements required much more than investments by Company stockholders and directors some 8,000 miles away. What was required was Indian money, Indian manpower, and Indian methods of collaboration.[20]

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[20] An excellent chronology is found in Srinivasachari, *History of the City of Madras*, 330–44. Henry Davidson Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, 3 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1913), and J. Talboys Wheeler, *Madras in Olden Times*, 3 vols. (Madras, 1861) show how these key centres moved into and out of Company control.

From its earliest days, therefore, Madras can be seen to have become a magnet of growing local prosperity. As the settlement grew, it became a pluralistic, heterogeneous, multifaceted and multi-purposed conurbation. Its most essential characteristic was its openness and toleration. Inter-communal cooperation was as necessary as vigorous competitiveness among its various local elites. Within the constraints of each community's customary laws (*mamool*) and common laws for public security, openness generated commercial vitality. In and around Madras, an increasing alignment of elite elements grew within the already existing multilayered and segmented system of 'clean' communities, with 'polluting' or 'untouchable' communities occupying hamlets in more open spaces on the fringes of each settlement providing the menial labour. Within this system, each local Company official, whether European or Native, functioned as but one among many members of several dominant elites. The *Pfarangi* (or European) 'Governor-in-Council' acted, as *primus inter pares*, or as an umpire, in many disputes as they arose from time to time, trying to make sure that these did not threaten the larger domestic tranquillity of the entire city-state. The task of these rulers was to organize and to rally local gentry in the interests of the 'commonweal' so that efforts in the common defence could be mounted against external dangers. The dynamics of combining these base units of 'small, hard pieces' within 'segmented' structures of each locality can hardly be appreciated, however, without reference to attitudes held by elite communities who were not English.[21]

From the very beginning, the society of Madras drew its strength from indigenous local leaders. These were men who strove to enhance their own wealth, as well as their ritual and social status. Notables not only came from Mylapore and Triplicane near at hand, but also from Kanchipuram, Tirupati, and centres much further away. Records are replete with the names and details of transactions undertaken by great Chettiar, Komarti, Vellalar, and other financial houses. The famous Malaya family which established their fortunes in the Madras trade depended upon the growth of the city-state for their own continued prosperity.[22] Similarly, all sorts of Europeans

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[21] 'Historical Account of the Establishment of Europeans at Madras or Chinnapatam', taken from a Marathi manuscript and translated by Kavali Venkata Boriah, a Maratha Brahman who was Colin Mackenzie's Chief *Munshi*, gives a fascinating glimpse of the entire process, from 1639 to 1763. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, ii. 289–92; and Srinivasachari, *History of the City of Madras*, 9–25, 46–8. See Colin Mackenzie MSS, Orental Manuscripts Library, Madras; British Library, London. Translations, xi, 1; xxvii, 1.

[22] Joseph Jerome Brennig, 'The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel: A Study of the Modern Asian Export Industry' (University of Wisconsin, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1975). S. Arasaratnam, 'Weavers, Merchants and Company: The Handloom Industry in South-Eastern India 1750–1790', *IESHR* 17: 3 (July–Sept. 1980), 257–81; 'Trade and Political Dominion in South India, 1750–1790: Changing British–Indian Relationship', *Modern Asian*

also came to Madras as adventurers trying to make a fortune. Prominent among these were Armenians whose presence in Company affairs world-wide was so valued that they were given free passage on Company ships, and even a seat on the Court of Directors in London. The Italian adventurer Nicolo Manuchi ended his days in Madras; and two highly gifted Jewish ladies from Paris who resided in the city also made great fortunes for themselves in the Golconda diamond trade.

What was especially significant for migrants and newcomers who entered Madras, however, was the capacity of leaders, both European and Native, to combine diplomacy and obduracy, as means to preserve civic tranquillity, to enhance local autonomy, and to extend the Company's influence far beyond their own territories. Local agents and brokers (*dubashis*) forged alliances with leaders in other centres of power and fended off huge predatory forces, whether Maratha or Mughal, that came from afar to plunder the city. Their success enhanced the Company's reputation. Similar success in meeting external challenges won respect for Bombay and Calcutta. Moreover, the gradual processes of incorporation, by which more and more localities came within the orbit of the Company, continued until, after encompassing over a hundred villages, commercial and political influences reached to far-flung networks of outposts and outstations across the entire length and width of the continent. Such holdings engaged local rulers in all sorts of mutually beneficial relations. Company allies and collaborators were to be found among almost all of the important local communities—Brahmans and Bali-jas, Chettiars and Komartis, Velalars and Velamas, Arabs and Armenians, Parsis and Portuguese, along with scores of other peoples. Through contacts, both far and near, servants of the Company were continually engaged in gaining new concessions. By such means, new alignments with hitherto non-aligned or unconnected elite communities from various localities were constantly being made; and more people were constantly being drawn into closer relationships with the East India Company. These relationships provided the rising fledgling power with manpower and money sufficient for its needs. In its own interests, the Company's Indian servants continually acted as mediators (*dubashis*), arbitrating local conflicts and brokering deals of mutual benefit. As first among equals, or *primus inter pares* within its own domains, the Company's operations helped to increase local prosperity. This process of gradually growing strength went on for over a century.

Two documents serve to illustrate the indigenous strength of the Company's local collaborators. One is the lineage history, or *vamshvali*, of Berry

Studies, 13: 1 (1971), 19–46; 'Indian Commercial Groups and European Traders 1600–1800...', *South Asia*, 1: 2 (1978), 42–53. K. N. Chaudhuri, 'The Structure of the Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *IESHR* 11 (1974), 127–88. Also see J. J. Brennig, 'The Malaya Family, Politics and the Chief-Merchants of Madras', ibid. 52–86.

Timmappa and his descendants. This family, coming from the Percavar caste, claimed an unbroken relationship between itself and the Honourable Company from 'when their Government was in its infancy'.[23] During the governorship of Elihu Yale (1687–92), Timmappa's younger brother held a seat on the Madras Council. At the founding of the Madras Corporation in 1724, another relative named Chinna Venkatadry was among the twelve original aldermen who, clad 'in scarlet serge gowns', carried 'Ornaments' and 'Maces', and ceremonially marched to the town hall with sixty to eighty burgesses clad 'in white China silk'.[24] During the governorship of Thomas Pitt (1698–1709), family members celebrated Pongal by annually presenting him with 'six yards of superfine scarlet' to mark the New Year and receiving a salute of five guns whenever a family member came to pay a ceremonial visit to the Governor.[25] Bundla Ramsawmy Naidoo, writing to Sir Thomas Munro in 1820, carefully explained the inner dynamics of local power structures to the new Governor. In doing so, he took pains to point out how local forces had contributed to the successes of the Company's Raj.[26] As he put it, 'Pagoda Bramins, continue, from time immemorial, while the daily ceremonies are conducting, praying in the name of Berry Timmappa, immediately after praying for the Honourable Company, and distribute pirate or honorary cloth round the head of trimal [*sic*: Tirumalai—or Sri Venkateshwara] offering garlands of flowers, teertam, the holy water, shadakopam, &c to the descendants of Timmappa . . . . A single festival is celebrated to this day, in honour of Timmappa, in the pagoda of Trivatore annually, the mantampam built by him.'[27] Such rituals were seen, at least by this old family, as making a contribution to the rise of the Company's dominions.

Some idea of how this growing imperial system was viewed by influential elements among its Native Indian agency and gentry can be found in a fascinating Sanskrit document of the late eighteenth century. Entitled *Sarva-Deva-Vilasa* (*SDV*),[28] or 'Celebrations of the Gods', this palm-leaf manuscript, consisting of an incomplete sheaf of eighty-six leaves in Grantha script (which now resides within the Adyar Library), boasted about how rich was the cultural and social life at the end of the eighteenth century and how good were the times that many of the landed gentry were enjoying.

[23] Bundla Ramsawmy Naidoo, *Memoir on the Internal Revenue System of the Madras Presidency* (Madras, reprinted 1908), 72–8. This boasts that Berry Timmappa was the 'Founder of Madras'.

[24] Ibid. 73. Srinivasachari, *History of the City of Madras*, 103. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, ii. 52.

[25] Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, ii. 100–4. Talboys Wheeler, *Madras in Olden Times*, i. 197–207.

[26] Naidoo, *Memoir*, 74.

[27] Naidoo, *Memoir on the Internal Revenue System*, 24.

[28] V. Raghavan (ed.), 'The Sarva-Deva-Vilasa: A Critical Historical Study', *Adyar Library Bulletin*, 21 (1957) and 22 (1958). Henceforth: *SDV*.

This was spelled out, telling in graphic detail how different local deities had brought fame and fortune to the Company, together with rich endowments and patronage for saints and scholars, poets and writers, courtesans and dancers and musicians, as well as for festivals and temples. Full credit was accorded to the supremacy of the Company's Raj and munificent support given to it by local gods and notables. In prose and verse, the writer of this work also extolled virtues possessed by agrarian lords and merchant magnates and close relationships with the Company that had brought fame and fortune to themselves.

Twenty-seven leading 'aristocrats' (*mahajans*) were singled out for honourable mention. Each person's 'public' career had been documented in Company records and in writings of contemporaries. Several had achieved special prominence as patrons of arts and letters. As a saga in praise of the social and ritual life of the metropolitan area surrounding Madras, this work focused attention on the 'festivals of different gods' each of which was identified with the incarnation of a particular deity's relationship to one or more of their patron-devotees.[29] All these notables came from old and respectable high-caste families (*kulina*). All possessed extensive landholdings in powerful, long-established villages that lay within the Company's domains.[30] All these patrons had held one or more important positions, often as a *dubashi* within the Company's service; and all were deeply involved in its commercial or political affairs.[31] All had been associated with the hereditary management of some temple or group of temples, which they had endowed, rebuilt, or renovated, and with festivals and other celebrations which they staunchly supported. All had carefully observed the prescribed requirements and rituals of their respective social stations with *dharmic* rectitude—especially in such personal obligations as ritual bathing, dragging of temple cars, and distributing of gifts to Brahmans, scholars, artists, musicians, and dancing girls. All, indeed, were honoured by being granted such titles as *rasika* and *sampradayika*.[32]

Prominent among these names was Kalasa (or Tottikhalai) Vedachala Mudaliar. Coming from a distinguished family of the Tondaimandalam Poonamallee Tulu Vellalars, he was the holder of a substantial landed estate (*samasthanam*), consisting of several large villages. Like his father Kesava Mudaliar, he had served as the Company's agent or broker (*dubashi*), in matters both commercial and political. He had endowed and maintained the Chidambareswara temple within the family's ancestral village. Finally, he had patronized the work of Sanskrit and Tamil poets, scholars, and artists,

29 *SDV*, 45.   30 *SDV*, 65.
31 *SDV*, 54.   32 *SDV*, 66.

and had himself painted, written poems, and composed music.[33] Another notable figure was Subba Deva Nayaka Mudaliar. Also a Tulu Mudaliar, coming from a landholding (*Mirasdar*) family of Nungambakkam, a family that had ruled the village for two centuries and had long supported the Agastyeswara temple, he and his relatives had occupied prominent positions under the Company since 1725. Deva Nayaka saw himself as a pillar of the Company's establishment. Both his father and his son having served as *dubashi* of the Mayor's Court, the one from 1753 to 1775, the other from 1775 to 1808, he himself had served as **a** military *dubashi* of the Madras army and had been under the direct command of two Company generals, Ford and Coote. After being wounded at the battle of Wandiwash in 1760, Deva Nayaka had gained renown for his support for such famous Sanskrit scholars as Misra Sastri and Seshadri Sastri and for sponsoring Vira, the renowned courtesan and dancer (*devadasi*).[34] Rangaraja (Sriranganayaka) Mudaliar and a Niyogi Brahman named Pindikuru Venkatadri Sharma had been connected to the Ranganatha temple of Tiru-nir-malai near Pallavaram. Venkatadri had been *Dharmakarta* (or Chief Executive) of the Vallanvinatha (Krishna) temple in Muthialpettah ('Madras Town' or 'Georgetown'). Lingappa (or Linga Chetti), as hereditary *Dharmakarta* of the Tiruvorriyur temple, had won renown for his generosity. The *Dharmakarta* of the Sri Parthasarathi Temple in Triplicane, Annasami Pillai, had struggled with the Collector of Madras over temple affairs, as found in the records, for ten years. The Manali Mudaliars, having also gained wealth and power as Company *dubashis*, had seen to the erection of the two new temples, Chennakesava and Chennamalleswara, located in Flower Bazaar. But, among all these notable VIPs, no name was repeated more often in the *SDV* text than that of Kalingaraj and his famous garden. Great social gatherings he had sponsored for celebrating special events, known as *sādas*—debates between *pandits*, concerts for music, and dances by Narayani, a courtesan of Kumbhakkonam—were among the largest on record.[35]

Communities of courtesans and dancers (*devadasi*), musicians, and poets who lived in the area incorporated by Madras had for centuries been custodians of a culture. They had been accorded a high place in relationship to princes, rulers, and temples of South India. In proportion to the rising prosperity and power of the growing imperium, prominent *devadasi* families migrated into the Company's domains from other important centres and

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[33] *SDV*, 67–71.
[34] *SDV*, 71–4. Also see N. S. Rajabadra Mudaliar, *Nungampakkam Kanappa Mudaliar Vanisa-Varalaru* (Madras, 1948). The family has been notable in Madras ever since Deva Nayaka's day.
[35] Mudaliar, *Nungampakkam Kanappa Mudaliar Vanisa-Varalaru*.

contributed to its ceremonial, cultural, and social life.[36] Company records describe dignitaries and notables who participated in public functions, festivities, and processions. Whether in garden parties, sponsored cultural events (*sādas*), wedding processions, temple festivals, or state-sponsored parades, status was measured, at least in part, by the quality, quantity, and visibility of *devadasis*. Company officials did not stint in their employment of dancing girls. At great processions, the Mayor and aldermen, in scarlet gowns, were accompanied by the Fort Captain with his infantry, the Pedda Nayak at the head of his peons, kettledrums, trumpet, and 'country music', and whirling of colourfully attired dancing girls, with the town gentry and local notables following behind them.[37] In short, as seen from their own perspective, contributions of local elite groups to the civic life and prosperity of Madras, each of which they detailed with its own peculiar or particular place and role within the larger corporate network, evoked great personal pride.[38] Madras was the archetype of a segmented and stratified socio-political system, and one in which no one community was strong enough, by itself, to dominate or exploit the rest. Whether as a city-state or, later, as a centre of imperial dominion, whether informal or formal, local resources contributed to its growth and prosperity.

As already seen, this growing centre of imperial power and wealth became increasingly pluralistic. As such, it meant many things for many different people. For Telugus, who had been prominent in its beginnings, Madras was always Telugu—it was 'The Gentoo City'[39] par excellence. For them, the name 'Chennappapatnam' or 'Chennappa's Port' honoured the

[36] *SDV*, 74–83, 83, 85–9. See also Ananda Ranga Pillai's autobiography, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, Dubash to Joseph Francois Dupleix*, ed. and trans. J. F. Price and K. Rangachari, 12 vols. (Madras, 1904–28). See also Srinivasa's *Anandaranga-campu*, ed. V. Raghavan (Madras, 1948). Other works on Madras: Venkatadhvarni, *Visvagundarsa-campu* (Bombay, 1906), and T. Subrahmanya Pillai, *Sivasthalamaniari* (Madras, 1931).

[37] *SDV*, 92–7. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, ii. 242. Talboys Wheeler, *Madras in Olden Times*, ii. 23. Srinivasachari, *History of Madras: Tercentenary Commemoration Volume* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1939), 147, 168. Much light was thrown upon this profession during the Anti-Nautch and Anti-Deva-Dasi campaigns at the end of the nineteenth century. See for example the writings of Veerasalingam and also M. S. Mani's *Pen Pictures of a Dancing Girl* (Salem, 1926).

[38] A fuller sense of what Madras had become is found in Holden Furber, 'Madras Presidency in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', in *Readings on Asian Topics* (Lund: Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series No. 1, 1970), 108–21.

[39] Benjamin Schultz, the Halle-Tranquebar missionary who was one of the earliest European scholars of Telugu and the first to print books in Telugu. His *Madras Dialogues*, originally printed in Telugu (*c.*1740–5), and then later in German and English (Halle, 1750), gives fascinating glimpses of life in Madras city. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, ii. 329–35. J. Mangamma, *Book Printing in India with Special Reference to the Contribution of European Scholars to Telugu (1746–1857)* (Nellore, 1975), 140, 281–2, 295. G. N. Reddy and Bangorey (eds.), *The Literary Biography of C. P. Brown* (Tirupati, 1978), 78 n. 97.

memory of an honoured ancestor of the Damarla Nayak family.[40] For Tamils, it was always a Tamil town—the heartland of Tondaimandalam, as proclaimed by the plough (*mēli*) symbol on banners of its Vellalar agrarian lords.[41] The English themselves called their citadel Fort St George, naming it after their patron saint. Clearly visible but a short way down the beach was the cathedral spire San Thome. Erected in 1628, only eleven years earlier, San Thome had been an enclave of the Portuguese since 1522. Its very name evoked the ancient tradition of the Apostle, whose shrine atop what was even then known as St Thomas Mount commemorated his martyrdom in Mylapore.[42] Mylapore itself, but a stone's throw from San Thome, was still a prominent and ancient settlement, hallowed in local lore for its linkage to Tiruvalluvar, author of the *Kural*, and to the *Ghana-sambandarn*. Within its environs lay an important Saiva complex, at the heart of which lay the enormous Sri Kapaliswara temple, with bathing *ghats*, training academies (*mutths*), red and white-striped temple walls and lofty tower-gates (*gopurums*), bazaars and residential quarters, surrounded by perpetually lush fields and groves of the *agraharams* and *mirasis* tended by agrarian lords.[43] Between this Brahman stronghold and Fort St George was yet another ancient temple establishment. As the purported dwelling place of the notable deity known as Sri Parthasarathi Swami, this huge 'temple palace' lay in the heart of the town of Triplicane (Tamil: Thiru-vel-kani).[44] Not surprisingly, many saw the city as a 'Temple Town' where temple density rivalled that of other such centres.[45] In due time it would also become a stronghold of *sanāthana-dharma* and fountainhead of an emerging modern religion that would, by the nineteenth century, become known as 'Hinduism'.[46] But also, just

[40] Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 63–138.

[41] *SDV*, 109.

[42] Ibid. 68–76. Loose linkages of legend and history were summarized in John William Kaye, *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative* (London, 1859), 2–12.

[43] Srinivasachari, *History of Madras*, 23–6, 27–9, 39–48.

[44] Ibid. 68, 73. K. V. Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region* (Madras, 1957), 57, 227–36. The Pallava monarch Nandivarman III (AD 844–66) is mentioned in the *Nandikkarambakkam* as 'Mayilallkavalan' or 'Protector of Mylapore'.

[45] Raman, *Early History*, 97–103. *The Census of India: 1961*, vol. ix, part XI-D, *Temples of Madras State*, i: *Chingleput and Madras City* (1965), indicates that of the 10,542 *pukka* temples, the heaviest concentrations are found in the river deltas and basins of Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, Coimbatore, and Salem; nevertheless the concentration immediately around Madras is impressive. Also see: 'Temples in Tamil Country, 1300–1750 A.D.', in Stein, *South Indian Temples*. On Hinduism see R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852–1891* (Tucson, Ariz.: Association for Asian Studies, 1974), 1–57.

[46] *SDV*, 109. Frykenberg, 'The Emergence of Modern "Hinduism" as a Concept and as an Institution: A Reappraisal with Special Reference to South India', in Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered* (Manohar, 1997, reprint of 1994 revision, from 1989), 82–107.

adjacent to Triplicane, if not intermingled with it, was one of the largest Muslim communities on the Coromandel.[47] To Muslims, therefore, Madras became a Muslim centre—not because *dar-ul-Islam* reigned supreme, but because so many Muslims had come and settled in Madras and had made Madras their city in South India and because so many Muslim *muhallahs*, *masjids* (mosques) and *madrassas*, with their libraries, could be found there. Here, the Mughal Nawab of the Carnatic would eventually build his beautiful Chepauk Palace in 1764.[48] Likewise, Madras increasingly became a centre for Christians. It perhaps contained, on a per capita basis, a higher concentration of churches than virtually any other part of India, Bombay and Calcutta included. As such, the city not only had its centuries-old Portuguese enclave, but also its Armenian settlement and its Jewish quarter.

For Christians, from the nineteenth century onwards, this city-state served as the field headquarters for many missionary societies. It would be Catholic for the Catholics, Evangelical for the Evangelicals, Protestant for the Protestants, and Syrian for the Syrians. Each of these communities, with its own peculiar history, managed to find a way to fit itself, however uneasily, into the fabric of the imperial system that was then evolving. That each did so was a highly intricate process, in which each Christian community came to terms with political authority in a uniquely different way. It is especially important, in this connection, to emphasize the sometimes intricate complexities of relationships between various kinds of Christians in India and between each community and various levels of political power and/or authority within an evolving imperial system.

Dynamics of Imperial Logic

Having looked closely at how one local area, with firm internal structures and its participatory social foundations, evolved so that by the mid-eighteenth century it was capable of becoming a viable country power, one can turn to the dynamics of political expansion that formed the Company's three city-states *within* India into springboards for expansion that led to the Company's becoming the paramount power *over* all India. For this purpose, by the mid-eighteenth century, the Company was able to draw upon substantial support from local elements of society. It could count upon already developed resources of skilled manpower and of money (from profits, revenues,

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[47] The most impressive collection of materials on this subject is to be found in the Saiyidia Library adjacent to the mosque of the same name in Triplicane (Tiru-vel-kani). Srinivasachari, *History of Madras*, 92–3, refers to a Hindu–Muslim communal stir aroused over the burning or burying of Kazi Viranna alias Hassan Khan (whose body was claimed by both communities).

[48] *Tohfut-ul-Mufahidden*, trans. J. Rowlandson (Madras, 1833); and *Tuzuk-Wallajahi of Ibn Hassan*, trans. S. M. H. Nainar, 2 vols. (Madras, 1934).

supplies, or loans), enough to meet larger challenges. But above all, the Company in India had developed a capacity for recruiting enough reliable servants and supporters to provide a constant flow of high-quality leadership. The Company and its networks of local rulers might even be seen as a kind of 'corporate dynasty'—a feature that gave it more durability than had ever before been seen or matched by any indigenous systems of dynastic power. Company records show, in clear detail, how massive were its dealings with local systems of power and how ever widening were its spheres of influence outside of Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay.[49] In short, one cannot simply say that 'the Company broke upon an agrarian order which was as exposed as that of the *brahman-sat-sudra* order had been to Telugu and low caste warriors in the fourteenth century'.[50]

A special logic of power was required for the construction of larger political structures, such as kingdoms and empires. As already indicated in the beginning of this chapter, in the absence of ideological glue strong enough to hold together hundreds of local entities and their little hierarchical structures, or to stop incessant struggles from going on between these tiny 'small hard pieces', it is not difficult to understand why, over the course of India's history, larger structures had not lasted very long. How more powerful structures managed to rise above all others and how other powers failed and disappeared requires more convincing answers than can be found in much of the existing historiography.[51] In a very elemental sense, success in politics was the skill of reconciling differences and adjusting to differences which could not otherwise be reconciled. As mentioned, the classical model for forging of political consensus was *mandala-nyāya*.[52] Both the *panchayat* and the durbar, in many respects mirror images of each other, required a skilful *sarpanch*, raja, or imperial monarch (*padishah*) astute enough to listen. Both kinds of institutions were forums for face-to-face 'open diplomacy'—for where 'decisions-by-consensus' or 'decisions-by-acquiescence' were the norm.[53]

[49] Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'Company Circari in the Carnatic, *c.*1799–1859: The Inner Logic of Political Systems in India', in Fox, *Realm and Region*.

[50] Burton Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian System of South India', in Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control*, 175–216.

[51] Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'India's Imperial Tradition', *Indo-British Review*, 6: 2 (1976), a Special Number, ed. R. E. Frykenberg.

[52] *Sukra Niti*, I: 4–19, in W. T. de Bary (ed.), *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York, 1959), 245–56. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Politics of Boundaries* (Calcutta: N. M. Ray Chowdhury & Co., 1926), 13–30; *The Political Institutions and Theories of the Hindus* (Leipzig, 1927). Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 11: 25 (New York: Everyman 691 A, 1950), 275. M. Ruthnaswamy, *Some Influences that Made the British Administrative System in India* (London: Luzac, 1939); and *The Making of the State* (London: Luzac, 1932).

[53] Much of such understanding comes from personal observations of village life in Telengana (1937–42). Paul G. Hiebert, *Konduru: Structure and Integration in a South Indian Village* (Minneapolis:

Despite clear differences, the purposes of durbar politics and *panchayat* politics were basically the same. In one sense, one was the other writ large or vice versa. Any all-knowing, sleepless ruling deity (*huzur*)—any imperial monarch was surely a 'divine presence'—was expected to pronounce the common consensus on what it was his people needed. A group of elders or notables, whether ministers or chiefs of constituencies, was expected to reach for a common consensus. No great super-overlord, whether Nayak, *nawab*, maharaja, or even Mughal Emperor, could afford to carelessly disregard politically important notables or elite support or forget the realities of power that required support from important communities—even if this was merely manifested in some token of acquiescence.[54] No political system, in short, could ever become stronger and more powerful if, at local levels, political structures kept breaking down and support from 'small hard pieces' went missing.

This logic, oversimplified, rested upon the binding power of contracts— in many varieties. The ancient *Sanskriti* logic of *mandala-nyāya*, as described at the outset of this chapter, was also epitomized in the Islamic (Perso-Arabic) metaphor of *namak-hallāl*—being 'true to the salt' as distinct from being 'salt-false' or *namak-harām*. In short, explanations for the Company's rise in commercial, military, and political strength and in its ultimate achievement of paramountcy over the continent, thereby becoming the Great Wheel of State or the *Mahachakra*, did not rest upon European superiority in science and technology or in raw power alone. That this also could not be accomplished without the sword does not negate the logic as it was worked out in the continent. Benoy Kumar Sarkar's classic aphorism—that 'a swordless State [aka political system] is a contradiction in terms'—in no way negated this classical logic of power.

But more than metaphors and models are needed to show how the process of political integration leading to dominion and empire over all India actually came about. A series of multilayered pacts, as previously described, had begun with the gold *sasanam* of 1639. This had been followed by innumerable 'treaties' (*sanads*, *cowles* or *kauls*, *firmans*, et al.). Adherence to agreements and contracts became the foundation on which the Company

University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 101–30. See also Manuscript Collections of C. P. Brown, Walter Elliot, Colin Mackenzie (in Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras; and in extract translations located in Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London) for such encounters. Elliot MSS, *Local Histories*, vols. i–iii (Eur. MSS. F. 46), and Robert Sewell, *Sir Walter Elliot of Wolfelee: A Sketch and a Few Extracts from his Notebooks* (Edinburgh, 1896), describe actual trials by ordeal as they were conducted.

[54] For an overview of such dynamics of power, see T. G. Percival Spear, 'The Ground of Political Obedience in the Indian State', *Journal of the Punjab Historical Society*, 4: 1 (Apr. 1935).

built its political reputation.[55] In successive stages, in three locations, the Company had first become a village lord, then a *zamindar*, and, eventually, a regional ruler (*nayaka* or *nawab*). By carefully propitiating and supporting local deities in various local and regional temples, and by skilfully weaving together various strands of contractual relationship with other local lords and regional powers (*doras* and *zamindars*, *nayakas*, etc.), its standing within complex networks of a highly segmented society had slowly increased. Of course, as an active agent within such networks, Company domains were no less vulnerable to depredation or pillage than any others. Its domains were no more 'isolated from the mainstream of conflict among Indian warriors'[56] than any other political power of comparable size. In encounters between local adversaries, Company agents formed leagues of local allies in order to deal with larger, more dangerous adversaries.[57] In doing so, it was no more immune than any other local power from miasmas of terror that were felt when predatory forces of such great and powerful warlords as Shivaji or Mir Jumla, one a Maratha and the other a Mughal, swept into the vicinity. Against such forces, Company servants, most of them agents or brokers known as *dubashis*, had to use every wile and wit at their command, including bribery, diplomacy, evasion, or outright payment of tribute. They propitiated the higher gods of war in order to make them turn their eyes and swords elsewhere. In the south, they were served by Baniyas, Brahmans, or warrior lords from *Sat-Sudra* castes, such as the Vellalars, Velamas, Kammas, or Reddis, within their walled and fortified villages and towns. Much the same happened in Surat, Calcutta, and Bombay, and their networks of sub-stations. Parsis and other Baniya communities, for example, moved from Surat to Bombay after beholding how stoutly a small band of Company merchants in their Surat station stood up to forces of Shivaji.[58] All lesser political entities alike shivered and trembled when huge forces of more ferocious warlords thundered up to their gates.[59] Larger tidal waves of military might that swept over were uncontrollable forces of nature—like droughts, earthquakes, famines, pestilential epidemics, and tidal waves.

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[55] C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, Relating to India...* (Calcutta, vol. x, 1892 edn.), sections on *Madras* (Ci). C. D. Maclean's *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, 3 vols. (Madras, 1886), is more complete. Best records of pre-Company and early Company contracts are embodied in inscriptions. See *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* and later, in Maclean's *South Indian Inscriptions*.

[56] Stein, in Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control*, 200.

[57] H. H. Dodwell, *Report on the Madras Records* (Madras: MRO, n.d.). District Records are even more revealing.

[58] *Diaries of Streynsham Master, 1675–1680*, ed. Sir Richard Carnac Temple (London: John Murray [for the Government of India], 1911).

[59] John Bruce, *The Annals of the Honorable East India Company* (London, 1810), and works by Robert Orme, Mark Wilkes, et al., give much data but little evidence that they themselves fully recognized the wider implications of this inner logic of power.

The key to survival was to hunker down and endure, to somehow divert, and, failing that, to somehow convert or subvert external threats, whatever their size. If all else failed one could simply flee into surrounding jungles.

Stages of Imperial Expansion

By the mid-eighteenth century, all three of the Company's small city-states became embroiled in the grander narrative of political affairs within the entire continent. Following the death of the Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, province after province broke away from Mughal control, kingdom after kingdom crumbled, predatory forces ravaged the countryside, and new invaders crossed the Indus from Iran and Afghanistan. Simultaneously, Great Britain and France, already locked in a worldwide second 'hundred years war', contended for mastery in India. Such chaos and devastation occurred in some parts that, according to R. C. Majumdar, human life became degraded and social morality sank to gloomy depths so much so that some people ceased to be heirs to their own ancient cultures and became strangers to the greatness of their own civilization. During these dark days, Company servants repeatedly had to use bold words and even bolder deeds to drive the swirling tides of anarchy and violence away from the gates and walls of their coastal enclaves. Valour was called for, and the title *Kompanee Bahadur* became appropriate. What transpired marked a transition within the by now 'British' Company from mainly mercantile to increasingly military activity.

Complex factors weighed in this transition. Long-standing partnerships between European and Indian merchants that had been forged, had provided local governors in the Company's city-states ready access to increasing pools of local administrative talent. As more and more business and working people poured into the bustling cities of Madras, country relatives and other talented local peoples with clerical skills also flocked to them in search of employment and other opportunities. But the new challenges required more than imaginative administrative talent. They called for increasing armed force—substantial infusions of military manpower and money. Ever opportunistic Company servants soon devised ways by which they could recruit both 'sepoys' and acquire 'silver' from within the country itself.

Early accounts tell how local people from warrior castes were initially hired to serve as police 'peons' (or 'pawns', meaning armed foot soldiers); and how these received disciplined training in the latest forms of military technology coming from Europe. Drilled and marched in town parades, small regiments of mercenary soldiers received special pay and privileges. By the mid-eighteenth century, more units of local fighting men were organized, drilled, and disciplined into effective military regiments. Equipped

with the latest weaponry, dressed in smart uniforms—somewhat novel within armies of India—and paid regular monthly salaries, with extra allowances for travel and pensions for their families (also something novel)—recruits from different castes, both respectable and less respectable, became professional soldiers. Emphasis upon infantry, supported by light field artillery, was itself a novel development in a continent where squadrons of horse predominated. This broke with military traditions where the prestige of cavalry, both heavy and light, could be traced back to arrivals of mounted Turk-Mongol squadrons (hordes) from Central Asia. The new infantry soldiers employed by all the European Companies were called 'sepoys'. As they developed a sense of discipline, solidarity, and importance, all such troops needed to become effective fighting forces were some successes in battle—experience and seasoning to harden bonds of loyalty and *esprit de corps*. Once this occurred, sepoy regiments became professional fighting machines as never before seen.

Second, experiments showed that funds to pay for sepoy regiments could actually be provided by local princes themselves. Joseph François Dupleix, the highly gifted Governor-General at the French Company's fortress town at Pondicherry, had the imagination to learn how this could be done. In 1746, during the War of Austrian Succession, his small, mainly sepoy army captured Madras. When a message from Mughal Nawab of the Carnatic at his fortress in Arcot commanding him to cease and desist was ignored, he sent a force of 15,000 horsemen to compel obedience. What happened next was altogether unexpected and sent a shock across the continent. The puny French force of 500 sepoys and soldiers, backed by a few pieces of modern field artillery, utterly routed the Nawab's Mughal horsemen. With this blow, the myth of European valour was born.

Nor was that all. Soon another prince who opposed the Nawab asked the British whether he could not also rent, if not buy, a small sepoy army, forces he needed to win in his struggle for political succession. British officers were only too happy to oblige him. Since this prince was eager to pay almost anything for such a bright and shiny new 'sword', a scheme was worked out whereby a newly minted force of trained sepoys could be rented out. Rentals were worked out in payments calculated in silver. Silver specie (*rupees*) sufficient to cover the training, weapons, and upkeep for all sepoys so employed, but also enough to yield handsome profits to their European officers, were more treasure than this prince, or most other princes, could pay for in coin. Since the treasuries of most princes were almost always empty and since they already owed much to merchant bankers, arrangements had to be worked out whereby the prince would pay for the sepoy regiments he needed by means of taking out a mortgage or a promissory note against yet to be collected land revenues within his domains. But, in

order for the Company's officers to actually receive the rentals that were owed to them, it was much easier and simpler for the prince just to turn over to the Company authority to administer his territories, together with the difficult task of trying to collect agrarian revenues from recalcitrant village lords within these same territories. Merchant bankers did not mind making such arrangements so long as they received money which they advanced to the prince for the rental of regiments. Access to tax collections, in short, served in lieu of specie for the limited-term rental of sepoy regiments.

But, if one prince could make such arrangements with Indian agents of the East India Company, so could others. Indeed, out of self-defence, princes felt obliged to compete against each other in working out the same kind of rental arrangements. In due time, as demands for their skills mounted, the services of sepoy regiments were sold for profit to the highest bidder. Fortunately for the Indian princes, as long as the English and French were at war and competing with each other for power in India, alternative 'regiments for rent' were available and rentals were not unreasonable. Yet, once the French in India were defeated, as happened with the fall of Pondicherry to the British in 1761, the English Company could make heavier demands. In short, it was through the competitive efforts between Indian princes themselves that the size of sepoy armies in India grew ever larger. Princes themselves, in other words, provided the money for raising bigger and bigger armies of sepoys. Little did they realize what they were really doing was competing for the purchase of Trojan horses and that they were actually encouraging and nourishing and even subsidizing the growth of a new form of imperial power. Indeed, as this 'arms trade' grew, the actual numbers and strength of these very effective 'new model' military forces soon loomed so large within their palaces that the very princes themselves began to become redundant. No longer were they necessary. In due time, they could be dispensed with altogether. Or, to provide a fig leaf of legitimacy, they could be 'allowed' or 'persuaded' to retire to their own palaces on very handsome pensions. The nineteenth century would see them competing to build larger and more sumptuous palaces than almost anywhere on earth.

A third factor, however, was to be decisive. While the French had discovered the system for making and renting regiments as a means of gaining imperial domains, while initially the French were very successful in exploiting their discovery, and while the French soon controlled virtually all of the Carnatic and Deccan, it was the sea that eventually led to their defeat. Even as they took steps to drive the English into the sea, and even as they even dreamed that, by playing off one prince against another, they could eventually construct an enormous French empire in India, the factor

which dashed their hopes was the more efficient exploitation of naval power by the British. By the mid-eighteenth century, English fleets had become all but supreme on the high seas. They roamed at will and were able to effectively cut off support from France and to provide badly needed logistic support—in materials and manpower reinforcements—for beleaguered Company forces along the coast. Moreover, through adroit diplomacy, Company agents (*dubashis*) were able to turn increasing numbers of local princes, soldiers, merchants, and free agents against the French. Overreaching ambitions, as well as high-handed methods and brash actions by some French officers, prompted increasing numbers of Indian rulers to realize that the other, somewhat older European (*Pfarangi*) power possessed enough sepoys for rent and sufficient military skills to help them stand up to French domination.

If efficient use of sea power was decisive, so too was another circumstance. The French Company, being state owned, was subject to the whims of backstairs and boudoir politics in Versailles. At a crucial moment, Dupleix was recalled, arrested, and thrown into the Bastille. Fortunately for the English, their Company also happened to have on hand a remarkable number of extraordinarily capable and courageous servants, both European and Indian. One of these, a lowly 'writer' (clerk), was Robert Clive. After Madras was captured by the French, Clive asked for a chance to serve in some military capacity. Put in charge of a small contingent of sepoys, he soon proved himself to be a daring and resourceful field commander. In a series of brilliant victories, fought in support of another Mughal contender, both Tiruchirapalli and Arcot were captured and then defended. Gradually, the French and their princely allies were decisively defeated, both in the Carnatic and in Bengal—whither Clive took his Madras-trained sepoys. In 1757, a battle was fought just outside the little village of Plassey. This event, leading to the downfall of the Nawab of Bengal, is sometimes considered to have been the turning point. But, actually, two pivotal events took place in 1761 that were, if anything, more important. First, the besieged French city-state of Pondicherry surrendered, thereby all but ending French hopes for empire in India. Second, and more significantly, a huge Maratha army suffered a disaster. At the second battle of Panipat, more than 100,000 of their troops were slain; and Maratha hopes for empire were dashed, for at least a generation or two. With these two events, a way was opened for the English East India Company, if it played an astute, careful, and cautious political game, to perhaps emerge as a major power in India. As early as 1765, only four years later, Clive persuaded the Mughal Emperor that his interests would best be served if the Company and its agents were to take over management of his affairs in Bengal. A treaty was drawn up whereby

the Company itself became Chief Financial Minister (*Diwan*) for the entire enormous province (*subah*) of Bengal.[60]

A glimpse of how one Mughal prince adjusted to rapidly changing realities within rapidly expanding domains under Company control is instructive. Nawab Muhammad Ali moved to Madras in 1755, and brought his entire family and entourage there for protection two years later, asking for a house in White Town (the Fort). As early as 1764, he built a grand palace for himself in Chepauk, only a short distance across the *maidan* from Fort St George. By 1767–8, the Khalsa Mahal, the Humayun Mahal, and the Diwan Khana had been built. Within a walled enclosure (*muhalla*) of 117 acres, Chepauk Palace not only gave security to the Nawab but also afforded him full opportunity to participate in the politics of the City, the Fort, and the rapidly expanding territories of the Presidency.[61] As legitimate Nawab of the Carnatic and designated deputy of the Mughal Padishah, his name, linked with that of the Emperor, was recited in the sermon (*khutba*) of every local mosque each Friday. From his own perspective, at least, the English were his servants. As such they now minted and widely circulated the 'true coin' (*halla-sicca*) of the pseudo-Mughal realm. The Arcot rupee, with the name 'Shah Alam' and a frozen regnal year stamped on it—rather than the Company's own coat-of-arms—remained the official coin of the Company.[62] Company servants—Europeans, Armenian bankers, and their *dubashis*—continued to advance large sums to the Nawab in lieu of yet to be realized land revenues. He in turn kept granting them more and more assignments of authority over various districts, so that they could recover these 'advances'. At the same time, while taking money from Company servants privately and clandestinely, he was successfully playing upon divisions within the Fort—'corrupting' members of the Madras government and setting them at each other's throats. The arrest, imprisonment, and death of the Governor, Lord Pigot (in 1777), was but one of several dramatic consequences of his 'midnight durbars' in Chepauk Palace.[63]

[60] The Mughal *mansabdari* title given to Clive himself was 'Nawab Sabut ul Mulk Jang Bahadur', 'Deputy [Emperor] of the Realm and Valiant Regulator of War'; it had the rank (*zat*) of 6,000 and 'riders' (*sawar*) 5,000. This put both Clive and the Company on a par to deal with any of the highest nobles of the Mughal durbar on equal terms. Every major Company official thereafter would hold a Mughal title, often with attached *zat*: *sawar* rankings.

[61] Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, ii. 507–8. On Chepauk Palace, see ibid. 609–14, and Srinivasachari, *History of Madras*, 181.

[62] J. S. Deyell and R. E. Frykenberg, 'Sovereignty and the "Sicca" under the Company Raj: Minting Prerogative and Imperial Legitimacy in India', *IESHR*, 19 (1982). F. Pridmore, *The Coins of the British Commonwealth of Nations to the End of the Reign of George VI 1952. Part 4: India*, i: *East India Company, Presidency Series, c.1642–1835* (London: Spink, 1975), 9, 66–9.

[63] J. D. Gurney, 'The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot, 1763–1776' (Oxford: University, unpublished D.Phil. thesis, 1968; Bodleian Library, M. S. D. PH. I. d.4406), is based on the Nawab's own diary (*Ruznameh*) and other Persian sources.

Eventually, however, this game went out of control. Paul Benfield's claim on one such advance, amounting, with interest, to over twenty-three lakhs of rupees (or £270,000 sterling), which was secured by the Nawab's pledge on the revenues of the Kingdom of Thanjavur (Tanjore), set in motion a chain of events which no one was quite able to control. Before the chain could run its course, it brought about the conquest of Thanjavur and brought ruin to scores of individuals, both European and Indian. Prolonged litigation took place lasting for several decades, over advances and loans to local princes of the Carnatic and Thanjavur worth millions that could no longer be recovered from revenue assignments. The Company's Raj simply took over. The Company then took steps to bring its 'corrupt' governments more firmly under control. As a result, such 'advances' underwent a metamorphosis and henceforth became notorious, if not scandalous, as 'the Nawab of Arcot's Debts'.[64] During the 1790s, disclosures of transactions involving the machinations of such skilful agents as Dubashi Avadanandum Paupiah brought about the destruction of many more careers and fortunes among officers of the Raj.[65]

Not until well after 1800, after rigorous reforms had been set in motion by Lord Cornwallis, so that most of the old European 'Pagoda Tree Shakers' had been removed from the Company's service, did this game begin to come to an end. By then, however, Chepauk Palace retained only a shadow of its old 'corrupting' influence. By 1801, virtually all of the Nawab's *mufassal* domains, lands stretching all the way down to Kaniya Kumari, had been directly annexed and absorbed into the vast Madras Presidency. Even the personal 'Jaghire' of the Nawab and tax-free endowments (*ināms*) which remained were carefully watched over by a special officer of the 'Political Service' sent from Calcutta. Ghosts of this notorious scandal would haunt and revive old memories. Thereafter Madras would never shake its reputation as *the* 'corrupt' city *par excellence*. With the Government of India then firmly established in Bengal, the lights of Calcutta shone ever more brightly and Madras sank into a despised and neglected status, as the 'Cinderella of the East'. As late as 1846, the Governor of Madras, Lord Tweeddale, felt obliged to act against an Armenian banker and a Scottish kinsman who were found to have loaned more money to the then Nawab of Arcot on predatory and usurious terms of interest. Whether or not this

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[64] John D. Gurney, 'Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot', in Anne Whiteman, J. S. Bromley, and P. G. M. Dickson (eds.), *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 220–41. Also see Mrs. Frank Penny, *Fort St. George, Madras* (London, 1900), 171, 174.

[65] David Halburton, *The Trial of Avadanum Paupiah* (Madras edn., 1825); A. V. Venkatarama Ayyar, 'Avadhanam Paupiah and a Famous Madras Trial', *IHRC Proceedings*, 12: 1 (1930), 27–36.

Scot, a senior civilian then sitting as Third Member of the Sadr Adalat, was led into a trap unawares, with a view to his ruin, cannot be determined.[66]

India's Raj and Imperial Paramountcy

'Raj' means 'rule' or 'regime'. The most notable achievement of the Company was the unifying of the whole continent (or subcontinent) of India. As indicated throughout this chapter, this was something which had never before been accomplished. Many previous rulers, going all the way back the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (*c.*300 BC) and recent campaigns of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, tried to do it. Only the Company succeeded. For the first time in history, a truly genuine 'Indian Empire' came into existence. In fact, for the first time the words 'India' and 'Indian'—and 'Hinduism'—came into existence. As such they referred to all of the continent and all its peoples. Company scholars, following in the footsteps of European missionaries, 'discovered' India and brought much knowledge about India and its culture to the rest of the world. Sir William Jones translated Sanskrit and Persian classics and was long credited with becoming India's first 'Orientalist'—a claim that is now disputed. Nevertheless, some of these same Company servants, individuals such as Halhed, Mackensie, Colebrooke, and Brown, aided by hundreds of scholars from elite communities of India, took systematic steps to 'recover' an awareness of the marvels of India's past civilizations. These scholars, in their hundreds, hunted down and preserved countless numbers of rare manuscripts, and even rescued major languages and literatures from deterioration, if not destruction. Finally, after building a huge single political system, with uniform laws and courts and administrative procedures, the Company tied the whole country together with a gigantic network of 'grand trunk' roads, inexpensive postal services, and, somewhat later, even telegraphs and railways. Cheap communication and transport systems made it possible for peoples all over India to learn more about each other and, eventually, to begin to think of themselves as being 'Indians', rather than Bengalis, Madrasis, and so forth. To the remotest jungle outposts, relay runners made regular daily circuits, jogging day and night with satchels of mail and jingle bells slung on short shoulder spears. Such things could not have come about without the hard work of hundreds of thousands of persons, virtually all of them being Indians.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all the Company's officers was Warren Hastings. What Akbar had been for the Mughals, Hastings became for the

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[66] *The Queen* v. *Alexander Maclean* (Chennai: Madras Supreme Court Records, 1849, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Egmore), as first uncovered, Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District, 1788–1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 213 n. 4.

Company. Sent to Calcutta as a boy by an uncle who wished to be rid of him so as to steal his inheritance, at a time when most newcomers died of disease within one year, young Hastings survived. Making himself fluent in Bengali and Persian, he made friends among local elites. By faithfully serving his masters, he ultimately rose to become the ruler over the destiny of India. As the Company's first Governor-General (1772–86), he was the one who established the 'Government of India' (which still exists). Despite the terrible famine that ravaged the land, he won gratitude from many people of Bengal for his efforts to end oppression and establish peace and order. He also strove to make friends for the Company among the great princes; and, not wishing to expand the Company's dominions any further, he persuaded them to join him in forming a grand system of alliances. By such means, he won recognition and respect for the importance and grandeur of the Company as *the* leading power in India. Very Indian in his ways of doing these things, even to the Mughal title received from the Mughal Padishah in Delhi and the ornate gold writing on the Persian treaties (*sanads*) which he signed, his style of governing was that of an Indian ruler.

But to many politicians sitting in London, Hastings was all too 'Indian'. Members of Parliament disapproved of his high-handedness, which smacked of 'oriental despotism', and were disturbed by allegations of corruption. 'Nabobs' had 'shaken the pagoda tree' and returned from India with dubiously won fortunes, while the Company had to beg for Parliament to bail it out of horrific debts. Company directors especially disliked costly military adventures, and policies which added more territory but interfered with commerce and hindered their realizing dividends. They wanted to earn as much as possible as cheaply as possible. Thus, in order to end corruption among the Company's European servants; reform and reorganize the Company's Indian governments; separate governing from profit-making trading functions; and in order to establish a set of principles and procedures for ruling over peoples of India without altering their age-old ways of life, authorities in London sent out to India a nobleman whose reputation was so above reproach that no one could question his integrity, a person in whom they could repose their total trust. Charles, Marquess of Cornwallis, was that person

Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General that Parliament imposed upon the Company for the purpose of bringing all of its affairs more firmly under imperial control, was part of the price to be paid for rescuing the Company from financial woes and fiscal irresponsibility. Also part of Pitt's India Act of 1784 was a parliamentary 'Board of Control'. This Board, with its chairman a member of the British Cabinet, was designed to oversee Company finances and policies, especially those relating to its 'foreign affairs' ('princely affairs')

in matters of war and peace. Such was the respect for the personal integrity and political skill of Lord Cornwallis that the very general who had surrendered to American colonists at Yorktown, and lost one huge empire, was entrusted with the work of cleaning up the internal machinery of the Company's various governments in India in order to rescue another empire. The very first peer to be appointed to high office in India was old-fashioned. Very English, even puritanical and stodgy in his 'roast-beef-and-Yorkshire-pudding' style, he was also altogether honest and upright. A student of Montesquieu and friend of Edmund Burke, he came to India with firm ideas about building a more durable constitutional structure. Indeed, except for its lack of democratic features, what he built can be compared with the work of contemporaries in America who, during that very same time, were constructing the US constitution.

The new Governor-General was especially successful in accomplishing four things. First, he established and embedded in law the principle of 'separation of powers' between the executive, judicial, and revenue branches of government—between sword, scales, and purse—a principle somewhat like that being adopted in America. Second, he set up an 'incorruptible' imperial civil service. Modelled perhaps on the old *mansabdari* system of the Mughals, this became the 'the stainless steel frame' of the Indian Empire. Known as the 'ICS' or Indian Civil Service, it became renowned for its high standards of dedication and for the enlightened performance of its officers. By such means, Cornwallis attempted to make sure that a tiny handful of hardly a thousand Europeans, aided by enormous numbers of Indian officials in subordinate civil and military ranks, would be able to govern the entire continent in such a way as to maintain and preserve the entire political system. Where Cornwallis failed, due to his alien Englishness, was in enabling the establishment of the same standards of service for its much more numerous hosts of Indian officials, who deserved the same. The third major accomplishment of Lord Cornwallis was his establishment of the judicial and legal system. This, partially begun under Hastings, still prevails, in greater or lesser degree, throughout the whole continent. The system codified indigenous elements of substantive law and custom, as found in each area, and then welded onto them a machinery of judicial procedures as these had evolved within English common law. Fourth and last, but not least, Cornwallis set in place a system of land contracts or treaties (*sanads*) with each and every one of the great landed grandees within Bengal that guaranteed their tenure in perpetuity. Known as the 'Permanent' or *Zamindari* Settlement, this was a system of governance by which virtually all agrarian domains and holdings, together with all ceremonial, social, and practical powers of governance pertaining to each locality, were delegated. Euphemistically referred to as landed 'estates' or *zamindaris*, each contained

hundreds of feudatory peoples and subject domains. This virtually guaranteed that, henceforth, the gentry (*bhadralok*) of Bengal would remain loyal. In return for payments of revenue (or tribute), taken from landed domains over which they ruled, they gained autonomy and security.

The years of consolidation that, for the most part, marked the Cornwallis period, were followed by years of aggressive expansion. Lord Wellesley (1798–1805), the next English peer imposed upon India, had very different ideas. The worldwide war with France having resumed and Napoleon in Egypt having avowedly grand designs for the conquest of India, Great Britain had its back to the wall (in a way somewhat analogous to circumstances it would face in 1940). The ambitious and determined new 'proconsul', having carefully studied a map of the entire continent while sailing to India, had already decided that the time had come for the Company to assert 'paramount' power *over* all of India, not just *within* India. The Company's sepoy regiments, then numbering about 300,000, had recently faced the Maratha armies once more—something that would be done twice more until the Marathas were finally vanquished in 1818. Still to be faced, immediately on landing in India, was the launching of a full-scale campaign against what remained of the domains of Tipu Sultan. The third and final Mysore War, completing what Cornwallis had begun in 1792, was quickly and efficiently conducted, resulting in the death of Tipu. From this position of advantage, with the Company having vanquished every major foe except for the Maratha Peshwa in Pune and a rising Sikh kingdom in the Punjab, Wellesley sent a dispatch to every prince, both great and small. To each, he gave a simple choice: namely, either make a formal agreement or treaty of permanent alliance with the Company or face the possibility of someday being dethroned, perhaps by force. The terms of each treaty, despite flowery Persian language inscribed on fine, gold-embellished parchment, were quite clear: namely, (1) so long as a prince henceforth let the Company handle all his 'foreign affairs', including all diplomatic relations with other princes; (2) so long as he provided permanent accommodation for a Company 'Resident', as ambassador or agent at his court (durbar) to 'watch', or make sure he lived up to treaty terms; (3) so long as he henceforth allowed a contingent of the Company's army to 'camp' permanently in a suburb just outside his princely capital, for the sake of his 'protection'; and finally (4), so long as the prince did not become too incompetent to control his own government or to produce a legitimate heir—then each prince would be allowed to continue to rule over his own peoples and hold sway over his own territories in perpetuity.

In many ways, this action was almost identical to the Permanent Settlement of Bengal. What had been provided for every notable already residing *within* the Company's own territories was now to be provided to princes

outside Company territories. The same kind of 'indirect rule' was offered to all princes whose domains lay beyond the borders of directly governed Company territories. Thus, at one stroke, and almost without any further fighting, virtually all the remaining states in the continent, over 600 of them, submitted to rule under the Company's Raj. Known as the system of 'subsidiary alliances', this action did for territories outside the Company's direct and formal governance—outside the territories under the Bengal, Madras, and Bombay Presidencies—what Lord Cornwallis and Lord Wellesley had done for 'estates' that lay inside the Company's directly governed domains. By 1818, one decade after the great 'proconsul', as Wellesley was called, had left India, paramountcy became all but complete. Only the Punjab, under the reign of the one-eyed Ranjit Singh and the Sikh Khalsa, remained outside the Indian Empire until the 1840s. Henceforth, India's Raj held sway as the supreme ruler over all India, in part ruled directly through Indian servants but mostly ruled indirectly through Indian princes. Such sway also extended to the far shores of the Indian Ocean. By indigenous means, and by gradual increments, the integration of all into a single political system was finally accomplished.

Conclusion

In what way this political logic and history has anything to do with the history of Christians or of Christianity in India is an issue that, however briefly, needs to be addressed. The historical circumstances surrounding the rise of the Raj are relevant in at least two ways. First, as indicated in the title to this chapter, the Raj that came into being—or rather, was constructed—was a hybrid entity. As such, it was as much Indian as it was British. While much of this chapter has explained how much method or logic was Indian, the same was true for manpower and money. The manpower employed was also substantially Indian—at times consisting of as many as 300,000 Indian soldiers and as many or more Indian civil servants. Crown troops, as distinct from Company sepoys, usually numbering 40,000 to 60,000, were rotated in and out of India on tours of duty. The Indian Civil Service, numbering scarcely a thousand British officers, plus various Europeans in technical support structures, totalled no more than just a few thousand. In metaphorical terms the Elephant of Empire was truly Indian, even if British rulers rode comfortably on cushions in the howdah. This Raj, in short, was in many ways India's Raj.

Likewise, from early times, Indian money paid for the building and maintaining of this empire. This was initially supplied by banking houses which provided loans and which then benefited from the revenues collected. Most of the money needed for empire was acquired and spent

within India, with the exception of pensions and savings of those who retired to Britain after their years of service, whether civilian or military, were over. At times, large loans were made to the Company, or to the Government of India, to cover fiscal deficits or shortfalls, with returns of interest that were high. This was certainly the case when money was needed to build railways throughout the continent. But, since London during the nineteenth century was a great financial centre, and was thus providing similar loans for railways in North America, Russia, and other parts of the world, this was hardly surprising. In any case, the revenues of India, in many ways, not only paid for such loans, but sustained and supported the British Empire throughout other parts of the world, to such an extent that Burma, Malaya, and parts of Africa were 'colonies' benefiting India as much as Britain.

Second, as a consequence of this being India's Raj, British policy makers and rulers were constrained and limited in what could be done on behalf of Christians. As subsequent chapters will show, the Company's governments in India were initially and uniformly hostile to Christian missionary activity, especially to the presence of English missionaries. Only later, after Company authorities came under political pressure from 'missionary interests' in Britain. Only due to Acts of Parliament, were they forced to slowly give ground. But, in so doing, they then faced growing reactions from those very elites of India upon whom they had depended for the construction of the Raj and upon whom they still depended for its stability. When this was forgotten, and these elites were taken for granted, mutiny and rebellion resulted, culminating in the Great Mutiny/Revolt of 1857. The Raj that eventually evolved into the nation of India was not just Indian—not just an Indo-British Raj. It was also, in some measure, a 'Hindu Raj'. As such, European rulers were obliged to make sure that 'Hindu' institutions did not suffer. (How this would be done will be explained in Chapter 10.) But, during the twentieth century, the threat of 'Hindu Raj' was a kind of dominion that many Muslims would not be prepared to tolerate.

8

ĀVARNA CHRISTIANS AND CONVERSION MOVEMENTS

Not much observation is required to discover that some communities have seemed much more open to the Gospel and more susceptible to turning to the Christian faith than others. Evangelical Protestant Christians in India, backed by missionaries from abroad, brought a fresh stimulus, together with new technologies—for acquiring literacy and for transmitting new knowledge about Scripture and science. Only after local agents had taken full ownership of the Christian message and after that message had been transformed into cultural idioms that were locally accessible and understandable, as well as attractive, and only after prolonged periods of incubation, lasting as much as fifty or more years, did large numbers of new conversions take place among any given people. Thus, only after early converts had absorbed and adapted their previous understandings of the Gospel message, together with new and modern technologies for transmitting their new world view, did explosions of spiritual energy occur that brought whole communities into the new faith. Most significantly, what may be called 'mass conversions' or wholesale transformations rarely if ever took place among peoples of high caste, those who fell within categories of the *pukka varna* peoples. Rather, such movements occurred mainly among *āvarna* and *adivāsi* peoples. Some were peoples who, in their myriads of distinct and separate ethnicity, were like tinder awaiting but a spark to ignite another explosion of 'mass' conversion to release them from chains that had bound them for so long.

The terms *āvarna* and *adivāsi* are Brahmanical, or *Sanskriti*, categories of analysis. As such, they have been applied to peoples that, in terms of ritual pollution, lie outside the bounds of ritual purity as defined within *varnāshramadharma* or as belonging to *Sanskriti* civilization itself. Peoples within these two categories are considered to be—figuratively as well as morally, symbolically, and technically—'colourless', and hence, 'invisible' or 'unseen'. They lie beyond the spectrum of visible colours and hence beyond the pale of civilization (*Sanskriti*). In symbiotic terms, therefore, they might as well not exist, except perhaps as species of subhuman creatures. They certainly do not count as fitting within any proper society—namely, within

any society defined by the classical fourfold colour-coding system (*chatur-varniya*) of bio-ethnic and ritual categories. Thus, there could be no doubt but that *varnāshramadharma*—namely, the 'caste system'[1]—could have no room for the impure, no place within its colour categories for either *āvarna* or *adivāsi* peoples and their pollutions. A Brahmanical invention, handed down from antiquity, *varnāshramadharma* was and is a system for defining ritual purity, an intellectual abstraction, or a device for measuring cosmic moral and ritual qualities.

While this Sanskritic paradigm was perfectly reflected nowhere on earth and, in concrete terms, may never have existed at any time, yet it did serve as an instrument by which Brahmanical elite communities could define and measure various categories of social reality. They applied this to each ethnically distinct people to determine where they might belong within a bio-cosmic ritual universe. Each and every life form that existed possessed its own 'birth' (*jāt*) properties. Thus, whether butterfly, fish, quadruped, or serpent, a separate set of bio-cosmic properties define each genetic code or DNA. Each distinct 'birth' (*jāt*) or 'birth group' or 'caste' (*jāti*) is assessed according to how pure or polluting it is and is then assigned a place within a hierarchical system of colour-ranked categories. Only those classified as belonging within the four proper or true categories ('colours' or '*varnas*') can be seen as properly belonging to 'mankind' (*manisha*). Those too polluted to be included are 'untouchable'. Hundreds of such peoples, each separate and distinct, are counted among *the āvarna* and *adivāsi* peoples of India. (How *adivāsi* peoples, who are seen as aboriginal or tribal peoples, became Christians will be treated in Chapter 12.) As concepts, *āvarna* (lit. 'colourless') and *Dalit* (lit. 'crushed'), the latter being the current self-designation of such peoples as a banner of socio-political protest, are essentially synonyms in the sense that they refer to the same categories of peoples.

Āvarna *Movements in the South*

It should not be surprising that, even before the full dawn of the modern missionary movements out of Europe and America had broken, the earliest mass movements of conversion occurred in the deep south, first in Tiru-

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[1] Literature on this subject is vast—dating from before Abbé J. A. Dubois's plagiarized 1817 classic *Hindu Manners and Customs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906) to Louis Dupont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), contested by such disciples of Edward Said as Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), whose views are taken to task by Will Sweetman, 'Colonialism all the Way Down? Religion and the Secular in Early Modern Writing on South India', in Timothy Fitzgerald (ed.), *The Religion–Secular Dichotomy: Historical Formations in Colonial Contexts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

nelveli and then in Travancore. As described in an earlier chapter, the very
first such movement took place among shoreline fishing communities,
especially the Paravars and Mukkavars. Given their circumstances, their
decisions were initially political—motivated by a desire to seek protection
from predatory Arab fleets and Nayaka armies. Only later did they gain
a smattering of genuine Christian knowledge from Tamil agents of Francis
Xavier. Later movements also would be brought about not by missionaries
but by local agents. While these would initially come from 'caste' (*varna*)
backgrounds, in due course leadership would arise from among the very
āvarna community in which the greatest movements were to take place.
In no country within all of India would the long-term consequences of
such movements be more profound than in Tirunelveli and Travancore.
What occurred in these two regions, moreover, took place in regions
still largely under the rule of local princes, before the full onset of the
Indo-British Raj.

Initial Mass Movements in Tirunelveli Country

Work as missionary *dubashis* begun in Tirunelveli by Sathyanathan Pillai,
Rasa Clorinda, and Chinnamuttu Sundaranandam David, if not also by
Joseph Daniel Jänicke and Christian Wilhelm Gericke, has already been
described in Chapter 6. Together these leaders laid the foundations for the
extraordinary movement of conversions that began within villages of Tir-
unelveli country between 1797 and 1799.

   This movement occurred among oppressed peoples. Then known as
Shanars (but soon to be known as Nadars as their standing in society
changed), these peoples were extremely energetic and enterprising. Yet,
like the Paravars along the coast whom Francis Xavier had assisted two and a
half centuries earlier, Shanars were despised by upper-caste peoples. The
menial work to which many of them were bound, mainly as toddy-tappers
and landless labourers, was viewed as polluting. Polluted peoples had long
ago been banished from living among respectable communities, inhabiting
ghettos on the margins of the social system. Restless, resentful of the
thraldom into which they had long been relegated, they only needed an
opening opportunity to break the stigma by which they were shackled.
Among the more independent and less docile, less submissive, *āvarna*
peoples, Shanars were ready and eager.

   The catalyst for the movement among these people was Chinnamuttu
Sundaranandam David. This third disciple of Schwartz, as already described
in Chapter 6, was a Shanar from Tirunelveli. As a young convert, he had so
impressed his by then ageing and failing mentor with his fiery charisma,
energy, gifts, and zeal that, in 1797, he had been sent back to Palaiyamkottai

to assist Sathyanathan. People of his home community of Kalangudi could hardly believe their ears as they listened to this by now highly articulate and well-trained leader. Electrified by his words, his entire extended family quickly embraced the new faith and asked to have a school set up in their midst. At Vijayaramapuram, not far from Kalangudi, four other extended families asked for the same. Families at Shanmugumpuram and other surrounding villages soon came to Palaiyamkottai in search of the new faith and of institutions that would serve as instruments of social transformation.

What especially amazed and excited Shanars was the prospect of escaping the baneful social consequences of hereditary pollution and perpetual social stigmatization. Commenting on David Sundaranandam's cultural and social transformation, his uncle exclaimed, 'I am glad to see that you behave so kindly towards us and make no distinction of caste.'[2] The atmosphere became charged with excitement. More and more people flocked to learn about the new Veda. As previously mentioned, in his report to Thanjavur, Sathyanathan reported: 'I continued talking with the people . . . they did not allow me even a quarter of an hour's leisure. David and I were constantly employed without the least cessation, in reading, expounding . . . and practically applying it to them. According to the gifts we possessed, each of us so directed his remarks as to make them appropriate to each individual's state of mind . . . In this manner we spent sixteen days . . . David and I worked night and day.'[3] Overwhelmed by a flood of new converts, Sathyanathan and Sundaranandam found that they could hardly cope with the situation. As a consequence, two younger German missionaries, Joseph Daniel Jänicke and Christian Wilhelm Gericke, came down from Thanjavur to help in meeting the demands of new Christian communities. These newcomers left a remarkable record of what happened. Much of this can be found in Robert Caldwell's carefully edited compilation, entitled *Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission*. Yet, their health soon broke down; and by 1803, both had died.

Yet, even as this mass movement gained momentum, as hundreds and thousands flocked to embrace the new faith, so that some whole villages turned Christian and temples were turned into chapel schools, a strong reaction came from aroused local landlords (*zamindars*). Threatened by what they perceived as a loss of control over agrestic servitude, and loss of involuntary or landless labour upon which their agrarian lordship rested, they descended upon the new Christian communities in force. Warlords

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[2] Robert Caldwell, *Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission* (Madras, 1881), 55–61. (Henceforth *REH*.) F. J. Western, *Early History of the Tinnevelly Church* (London: CMS, n.d.), 88–92. A. J. Appasamy, *Centenary History of the C.M.S. in Tinnevelly* (Palamcotta, 1923), 16–20. Letter to Schwartz by Sathyanathan, 10 Apr. 1797.

[3] *REH*, 61: Letter to Schwartz by Sathyanathan, 10 Apr. 1797.

(*palaiyakaran*) and Marava toughs or 'club-men' (*tāḍi-kambukarar*) were brought down from Ramnad to restore their former dominion. These forces 'plundered, confined, and tortured Christians', pulling down their small thatched dwellings, smashing their prayer school halls, burning their books, and taking their property and livestock. Thousands of Shanar Christians lost everything they possessed. Many were beaten, stripped, and sent into the jungle.[4] This period of exposure to insult, intimidation, persecution, and violence coincided with even more violent disturbances and wars that had been tearing apart much of South India for half a century. As local magnates contended with each other and with larger lords who in turn fought with each other, there was an ascending spiral of violence and rapine. Forces of Tipu Sultan from Mysore, the Marathas, the Carnatic Nawab, and the Company, all of whom were contending for mastery, often swept through the area. Famine, devastation, and pestilence stalked the land, bringing misery to many people in fortified towns and villages. The outbreak of warlords ('poligars' or *palaiyakaran*) only made matters worse. Such general unrest gave occasion and opportunity for old scores to be settled and for new grievances to be discovered. Yet, in the years between 1799 and 1802, even as strong-arm 'club-men' (*tāḍi-kambukarar*) were attacking the new Shanar Christian communities and causing such suffering and persecution, numbers of conversions increased.

In 1802, a fresh wave of conversions swept across Tirunelveli villages and brought another wave of persecution. A small band of Shanar converts, twenty-eight persons who had been driven from their homes, resolved to establish an entirely new colony for themselves. Their action led to the formation of a new and exclusively Christian 'village of refuge'. Modelled after 'Cities of Refuge' that had once existed in ancient Israel,[5] this new settlement was named *Mudulur* or 'First Village'. As a place of refuge for persecuted Shanar Christians, it rapidly grew as numbers of new refugees increased and flocked into it. During its first two months, between April and June, 274 Shanars were also baptized. Many more Christian refugees continued to arrive in the months and years that followed.[6] In October 1802, at the village of Achampadu some distance away, members of another forty-eight households not only received baptism and changed their names, but also renamed their village 'Bethlehem'. Sathyanathan wrote: 'This is like a new life to us. Never has such a thing been seen in this country before.'[7]

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[4] Caldwell, *REH*, ch. III, pp. 66–122. Also Robert Caldwell, *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevelly . . .* (Madras, 1881), 194–230; chs. VI–IX, especially those on 'The Last Poligar War', and 'Conclusion of the Poligar War'. J. Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, 5 vols. (London, 1839–60), book VIII, p. 676.

[5] Old Testament or *Tanakh*, Fourth Book of Moses: Numbers 35: 6–32.

[6] *REH*, 61, 67–8. Western, *Early History*, gives same account.

[7] *REH*, 80–2. Western, *Early History*, 68. From Christian Wilhelm Gericke's Journal.

From the village of Nevaladi, Gericke reported: 'Since the whole village resolved to embrace Christianity, they purified their idol temple and made it fit for Christian worship'; and meeting 'until after eleven at night', they elected a *panchayat* of church elders.[8] At Kundal, a temple was turned into a prayer house; and at Karikovil also, still another temple began to serve as the prayer school house for forty-six families, or 206 persons. Here also, after a crowded meeting that lasted until midnight, people remarked: 'Never did so many people come to this house when it was a temple. God is drawing us to the true Veda.'[9] In yet another place, vacant land was acquired for the settlement of thirteen households; and a new congregation consisting of forty-eight households of new Christians who had been expelled from various nearby villages decided to name their new colony 'Jerusalem'. As soon as this had been done, and after a preacher had been assigned to lead them in worship services, a non-Christian schoolmaster came forward and offered to serve as their teacher.[10] In November of 1803 alone, the total number of individuals who acknowledged coming to the new faith was registered at 3,057 persons. During this period of constant strife and threats, especially after foes came and burned down the chapel school in Mudulur, Sundaranandam David raised a body of Christian 'club-men' (*tāḍi-kambu-karar*) for the protection of Christian villages. By that time, his reputation as a fiery leader had so increased that he became known as the 'Lion of Mudulur'.[11]

It is important to note, in this context, that it was during these very same months that the East India Company decided to annex all remaining domains of the Nawab into the Madras Presidency. What impact that decision, which occurred in 1801, might have had on the forming of these Christian colonies is difficult to determine. There can be no doubt, however, that the forming of new colonies as 'villages of refuge' was so successful that more settlements soon followed and that they continued to multiply in the subsequent decades, to the extent that the entire culture of Tirunelveli seems to have been irrevocably changed. Among the earliest of these new colonies were Megnanapuram, Nazareth, Samaria, Gallilee, Sawyerpuram, and Anandapuram. These would be followed, a decade or two later, by Pohlepuram, Houghpuram, and Dohnavur. All of these became familiar names in the revenue and judicial records of Tirunelveli district (*zillah*).

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[8] Western, *Early History*, 63; *REH*, 83.
[9] *REH*, 84. Christian Wilhelm Gericke's account is filled with details of these and many other events.
[10] *REH*, 68, 114; also in Western, *Early History*.
[11] *REH*, 100, 100–13.

Among innovations that followed the creating of Christian colonies were voluntary cooperative societies, mutual aid and care societies, and societies to shelter any who might be fleeing their homes. Eventually, as numbers of Christians in each locality doubled, and sometimes tripled, in each succeeding decade, missionaries arrived. These helped to construct and develop further institutional infrastructures:—schools to provide basic universal literacy, colleges and seminaries to train leaders, dispensaries and hospitals and self-help or welfare societies to care for the sick, the poor, the widows and orphans. It was by means of such actions that Pietistic Tirunelveli Evangelicals, whose forms of worship reflected their German roots, began to transform the political economy of the Tirunelveli area, thereby also beginning to bring about profound transformations in local culture and society.[12]

Exactly when Shanars began to call themselves Nadars is not certain; but it seems quite likely that it was at about this time they ceased to think of themselves as being, in any way, an *āvarna* people. Of one thing there can be no doubt: they rejected any term that equated them with excrement. At this time also, Tamil Christian leaders within the villages of Tirunelveli screwed up their courage and appealed to Company authorities for surcease and succour. When authorities in Tirunelveli and Madras, European and Native, failed to heed their pleas, they sent off petitions to the Company's Court of Directors and to the British Parliament in London. In formulating their protests, their efforts were aided by missionaries in Thanjavur and by the mediating agency of the SPCK in London. In making these efforts, they had the temerity to remind their new British rulers that, since they were subjects of a Company whose European officers represented a 'Christian nation', they had a right to expect more protection under the Company's rule.[13] 'Inasmuch as Bramins and other high caste men hold offices, persons of their caste alone were permitted to enter the courts and formally to make their complaints, and to obtain assistance. Low-caste people, such as Shanars, Pallar, Pariahs, Sakkiliyars, Semmars, Washermen and Barbers, etc., are prevented from entering.'[14] Agents of such abjectly low-caste

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[12] R. E. Frykenberg, 'The Impact of Conversion and Social Reform upon Society in South India during the Late Company Period: Questions Concerning Hindu–Christian Encounters, with Special Reference to Tinnevelly', in C. H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright (eds.), *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation: c.1830–1850* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1978), 187–243.

[13] Extract of General Letter from Court of Directors (COD) to the Government of Fort St. George, Madras (GOM) (Public), 23 Jan. 1805, in Caldwell, *REH*, 109–11.

[14] 'The Humble Petition of the Christian inhabitants in the Zillah of Tinnevelly, to the Rt. Hon. the English Houses of Parliament', translation from Tamil; in appendix C [SPCK Extract]. From *Memorial of the Church Missionary Society . . . in Reference to the Renewal of the Powers to the Hon. East India Company* (London, 27 May 1853), 72.

'soil slaves' could only try to appeal over the heads of their local masters when seeking for redress—standing afar off or lying on their faces and calling out, 'as men invoke god, saying "Swamy!! Swamy!!" so as to hope and pray for a hearing'.[15] The plaintive tone of their plea, transmitted by the Halle-SPCK missionary in Thanjavur at that time, Johann Caspaer Kohlhoff, was clear:

If it were under the government of heathen kings that this injustice were shown to Christians, it would not be a wonder; but that under the government of Christians, and their servants, Christians should suffer injustice, and that by their means the increase of Christianity is prevented, is a matter of astonishment.[16]

Unfortunately for the plaintiffs, during those times, a reply to a dispatch to London could take from eighteen to forty or fifty months—especially if correspondence went by sea around the Cape of Good Hope and back again, rather than through the Red Sea and Arabian desert to the Mediterranean. Thus, despite successful lobbying on their behalf by SPCK officers in London, the favourable response that was eventually sent arrived too late to do much good. A drum-beat of other protests against persecution and mistreatment would continue during the decades that followed—with a steady stream of cries for redress, for which there seems to have been almost no relief from local officers of the Company.

By 1806, a crisis of leadership developed among Tirunelveli's Evangelical Christians. Both Jänicke and Gericke had sickened and died, one in 1800 and the other in 1803; Rasa Clorinda followed them to the grave (*c.*1806); Sathyanathan, exhausted and ill, retired to Thanjavur in 1806; and Sundaranandam David, sole remaining leader of the Tirunelveli Evangelical community, seems to have died in Bethlehem at about the same time. Previous attempts on his life would prompt some to believe that he was poisoned by anti-Christian foes and his body thrown onto the seashore. No new leaders of comparable ability came to fill the vacancies that these individuals left behind. At about the same time, down in Nagarkoil, just a few miles away, an ardent and unconventional younger German missionary by the name of Ringeltaube arrived. But Nagarkoil lay within domains of the Maharaja of Travancore; and, as we shall see, Ringeltaube also struggled against many adversities in order to assist the small and persecuted community of recent converts in Mayiladi. A decade later, completely worn out and ailing, he embarked from Madras in 1815, never again to be seen.[17]

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[15] Ibid. 75.

[16] Ibid. 78.

[17] Caldwell, *REH*, 123–68, covers the 'Ringeltaube Period'; and (pp. 169–77) this is called the 'Dark Period' by Caldwell. See W. Robinson, *Ringeltaube the Rishi* (Madras, 1908), letters of 6 July to 4 Oct. 1804.

Social Transformation in Tirunelveli Country

Evangelical Christians of nineteenth-century Tirunelveli, despite being overshadowed by the growing administrative and technological presence of an increasingly enormous imperial system and influences of the Raj, remained largely in control and able to develop their own institutions. The Gospel was interpreted in new ways and extended to new peoples, reaching ever lower strata of society, seeking out peoples in ever more remote jungle areas, and touching more women and children. Help for people in want— people hitherto neglected, impaired, diseased, or relegated to exclusion and oppression—entered into an ever broadening self-consciousness. Expanding notions of humanity suggested a radical vision of what this entailed: namely, that all people—men, women, and children, no matter what their birth, colour, or previous condition—were to be seen as being of equal worth, not just intrinsically in the sight of God, but also in the circumstances, opportunities, and possibilities of life on earth. Expanding visions required new agendas and new laws. Equal access to basic protections and needs of life—food, health, education, and opportunity—were opened up. Christian responsibility mandated more radical and revolutionary changes in society.

Much of this transformation had begun to take place long before any European missionaries arrived. As already emphasized, the turning of people from many local communities to the Christian faith was seldom if ever directly attributable, at least initially, to contacts with foreign missionaries. Indeed, well-trained Vellalar and Shanar leadership, the one being high caste (albeit Sudra in Brahman eyes) and the other being of *āvarna* caste, would trigger every movement that took place. After their liberation, it would not be long before Shanars began to see themselves, and think of themselves, as 'Nadars'—as 'Lords'—instead of accepting an epithet that hitherto had equated them with excrement. Moreover, the mass movements that then began in 1799 and continued to break out sporadically, almost every decade thereafter throughout the nineteenth century, usually took place only after an incubation period of roughly fifty to seventy years. Thus, by the late 1820s, when the British Protestant missionaries were first beginning to arrive in Tirunelveli, Pietistic Tamil congregations, initially under Vellalar leadership but then increasingly Nadar, had been growing in the area for over fifty years. Part of this continuing process of internal transformation can be seen as then receiving further encouragement as a result of the remarkable influence, first of an affluent and influential English military chaplain and then of the arrival of yet another gifted German missionary.

In 1816, James Hough came to Palaiyamkottai. An ardent disciple of Charles Simeon of Cambridge, through whom he had secured a military

chaplaincy in the Company's Ecclesiastical Establishment, his only reason for coming to India had been to carry out the evangelical mandate of the Gospel. Private means enabled him, beyond his light official duties, to devote his energies and resources to the strengthening of Tirunelveli's Evangelical congregations.[18] With Hough's coming, a new phase of growth within the Tamil Evangelical community began. The only other non-Catholic European missionary in South India, Wilhelm Tobias Ringel-taube, had disappeared a few months earlier after embarking at Madras in 1815.[19] Surviving records showed that in 1806 there had been a total of 6,514 Evangelical Christians in the Tirunelveli area. Most of the fifty-three congregations that Hough discovered were meeting in prayer houses of mud and thatch. Their children, mainly boys, were still being taught to memorize and to copy Scripture upon *cadjan* leaves.[20] Wherever Hough travelled he met with joyful welcome from village congregations. These he found to be 'much better instructed than one would have anticipated'. About the congregation at Mudulur, he wrote: 'Seated under the shade of a coconut tree a considerable company of women [were] spinning cotton and singing . . . hymns to the motion of the wheels. After service, a great part of the congregation shewed no disposition to disperse but, seating them-selves round the door, sang hymns to a late hour.'[21] Hough's rough estimate set the total number of non-Catholic or Evangelical Christians in the area at between 3,000 and 4,000. The number of Catholic Christians, mostly Paravars, he estimated to number about 20,000.[22]

Hough immediately devoted himself to assisting these Christians. Within two months of his arrival in Palaiyamkottai, he had opened two Tamil schools and an English school—the latter attended mainly by children of Native civil servants and military officers of the Company. With his own funds, he erected two small buildings, hired an English schoolmaster, sent a Tamil teacher to Tranquebar for training, and then recruited other Tamil teachers. Within one year of his arrival, enrolment in his schools had risen to 169 boys. During his second year, he opened a second English school and two more Tamil schools. By the end of 1819, with financial help and books which he had received from the SPCK and the CMS, the two English schools were providing instruction for 59 students and fifteen Tamil schools

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[18] Western, *Early History*, 142; and volume v of Hough's *History*, completed by his son, contains a partial view of Hough's life.

[19] Caldwell, *REH*, 169–77; and Robinson, *Ringeltaube the Rishi*, letters of 6 July to 4 Oct. 1804.

[20] *REH*, 107, 180. Hough's *History*, ii. 250, (book X, ch. IV), pp. 250–2.

[21] *REH*, 187.

[22] Caldwell, *Political and General History*, 243, 247. This is repeated in the *Tinnevelly Manual*. All seem to repeat Hough's reports to SPCK. Appasamy, *Centenary History,* 23. *Memoir of the Rev. C. T. E. Rhenius, Comprising Extracts from his Journal and Correspondence, with Details of Missionary Proceedings in South India*, by his son J. Rhenius (London, 1841) (*MOR*), 197.

were bringing literacy and learning to 551 students. During his four years in Tirunelveli country, he collected as many documents and records as possible, beginning what would eventually become his mammoth five-volume *History of Christianity in India* (1836–50). Finally, out of private funds that he managed to raise, two new Christian 'villages of refuge', Pohlepuram (for Pohle, d. 1818) and Houghpuram, were endowed.[23]

After Hough had left Tirunelveli in 1820, he came into greater public prominence, both in India and in Europe. Much of this occurred when he became engaged in a pamphlet war with Abbé Jean Antoine Dubois. Dubois, a secular monk of the Missions Étrangères and an arch-conservative supporter of the *ancien régime* who had 'escaped from one of the fusillades of the French Revolution, and . . . since lived amongst the Hindoos as one of themselves', had submitted a manuscript to the Madras government on 'the character, manners, and customs of the people of India, and of their institutions, civil and religious'.[24] This famous work, which is still in print, eventually made Dubois famous, even though we now know that the work was plagiarized from what had originally been composed by Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux many years earlier, during the reign of Louis XV, as demonstrated by Sylvia Murr.[25]

Dubois did not believe that any kind of genuine conversion was possible; nor did he favour 'proselytism' or any other sort of meddling with indigenous institutions in India. The publication of his plagiarized book in 1817[26] was, in its way, a direct assault upon the outlook of all Evangelicals and also upon the views of social radicals who were emerging and coming out to India from Europe after the French Revolution. At root, this was fundamentally a dispute over whether human nature can be redeemed and transformed. Dubois attacked the very idea that human nature could in any way be changed for the better or that progress in any part of society in

[23] *MOR*, 197.
[24] *REH*, 181–9: body of Hough's report to the SPCK Madras committee (printed 1821). A detailed report listed schools, students, expenses, etc., including three schools for girls, the first of this kind (p. 194). Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 22–6, indicated 12 schools and 479 pupils. Some of these apparent contradictions have yet to be unravelled.
[25] In her *L'Inde philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire* (Paris: École Francaise d'Extrême-Orient, 1987), she traces this to his *Mœurs et coutumes des indiens* (1777), ed. Sylvia Murr, ii: *L'Indologie du père Cœurdoux: stratégies, apologétique et scientificité*? I am indebted to Dr Will Sweetman (University of Otago), for his unpublished 'Conceptualizing the Heathen: Hinduism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', 4. I myself personally received this information from the late Sylvia Murr when we met at the Final Congress of Orientalists (July 1967).
[26] *Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India; and of their Institutions, Religious and Civil*, by Abbé J. A. Dubois, Missionary in the Mysore (Madras, 1879), p. vii, 'Advertisement'. *Hindu Manners and Customs*, variously titled, is a classic and is still in print (Oxford University Press). First published in 1817 and then followed by other editions, it often appears with biographical notes and commentary.

India was in any way possible. His views were supported by some clergy-men in England who felt Christian missions were not necessary.[27] Hough responded with *A Reply to the Letters of the Abbé Dubois on the State of Christianity in India* (London, 1824), which extolled reformations going on among Syrian Christians of Travancore, explained conversions occurring, and called for promoting Christianity among both Europeans and Natives of India.

But, perhaps no event so transformed the situation for Tirunelveli Evangelical Christians, if not for Tamil Christian communities as a whole, as the arrival in 1820 of Karl Theophilus Ewald Rhenius (1790–1838). Rhenius was both brilliant and controversial. Like Schwartz he was a Prussian who had lost his father when he was a young boy. Yet, despite coming from a family of military officers at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, he himself had been deeply influenced by Herrnhut and the ideals of Moravian Pietism. After being trained by Dr Johann Jänicke at his Missionary Seminary in Berlin, Rhenius had been recruited and sent to Madras by the still fledgling CMS (Church Missionary Society), at a time when Anglican missionaries were still hard to recruit.[28] During his six years in Madras, his quick mastery of Tamil, combined with his restless mind, acute imagination, and rigorous scholarship, soon attracted the attention of local people, including Brahmans and Jains among whom he built close relationships. At the same time, his outspoken, unconventional, nonconformist, and even radical views were somewhat unsettling among local Anglicans. Also at the same time, even while the nearly defunct local branch of the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) was about to turn over its South Indian stations to the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts), it became increasingly difficult for the CMS to any longer disregard Hough's constant pleas for help in Tirunelveli.[29] The local Corresponding Committee of the CMS, perhaps all too glad to rid itself of the obstreperously dynamic Rhenius and only too happy to send him to such a remote place, far away from its immediate concerns, asked him to work in Tirunelveli.[30]

Had the CMS had a clue of how important Tirunelveli would become, it might not have done so. Down in Palaiyamkottai, 400 miles away and almost at the tip of the Indian peninsula at Kaniya Kumari, this maverick might soon be forgotten. Indeed, they were also glad to see other recent

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[27] James Hough, *The Protestant Missions Vindicated, Against the Aspersions of the Rev. N. Wiseman, D.D., Involving the Protestant Religion* (London, 1937). This was the last of a series of exchanges on the value of missionary endeavour.

[28] Robert Caldwell, *Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions* (London, 1857), 53.

[29] *MOR*, 1–44, 45–167.

[30] Ibid. 194. Joseph Mullens, *Missions in South India* (London, 1854), 108–9.

German (Evangelical) recruits, such as Ludwig Bernard Schmidt, J. Winckler (1827–34), Paul Schaffter (CMS: 1827-61), P. Fjellstedt (SPG: 1832-5), and Joseph Müller (who would marry the daughter of Rhenius), join him in such a remote location.[31] Many decades later, Rhenius would be described by Bishop Robert Caldwell as 'one of the ablest, most clear-sighted and practical, and most zealous missionaries that India has ever seen'.[32] Now considered the 'Apostle to Tirunelveli' by virtually all Tamil Evangelicals, if not all Christians there, Rhenius today continues to inspire commemorations, and monuments are erected in his honour. That he was an energetic and fiery, charismatic and magnetic leader there can be no doubt. His tireless efforts, giving substance to Hough's arguments, soon raised up and inspired a new phalanx of Christian leadership in Tirunelveli. This, in turn, brought about another great outburst of radical conversions that led to a wider movement of social revolution.

The picture of 'Tinnevelly District' as it was officially known in 1820, is that of a distinct country in its own right, with its own local culture. According to statistical tables found among Rhenius' private papers after his death, the district had a population of 787,296 persons within its area of 4,403 square miles.[33] (An 1856 census, after thirty-six more years of un-interrupted peace, would later count 1,267,416 inhabitants in a district expanded to an area of 5,482 square miles.[34]) Less than one out of twenty were Brahmans, and a comparable number were trading communities, such as Chettiars. As many as half the people were high-caste or 'clean' non-Brahmans, mostly 'Sat-Sudras' such as Vellalars, ancient agrarian lords to whose lineages and heritage Tamil culture owed its being. Perhaps one-tenth of Tirunelveli's people were Shanars. One-fifth of the population were relegated to the lowest levels of untouchability—such as Pallars, Paraiyars, Chakkriars, Kaikallar (aka Sengunthar, meaning 'red dagger'), and other such peoples. Rhenius found the area, in his words, 'wholly given to idolatry'—with 2,785 solidly built and imposing *pukka* temples, forty-two of which were especially large and highly sacred to 'caste' (*varna*) peoples, and over 10,000 *ko-ils* or petty places of worship (cone-like pyramids of brick or mud, four to six feet high).[35] To his dismay, Rhenius also discovered that annual disbursement in state support for institutions of 'idolatrous worship' in pagodas (temples) came to over two lakhs of rupees (2,12,261-5-6 rupees). He estimated that followers of Shiva were six times

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[31] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1706–1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 218–22.

[32] Ibid.

[33] *MOR*, 195 ff.

[34] Caldwell, *Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions*, 27.

[35] *MOR*, 196.

more numerous than followers of Vishnu. Among vast numbers of lowest-caste (*āvarna*) people not wholly 'given over to demonolatry', devotion to a specific different 'mother goddess' in each locality predominated. Finally, he found that over 50,000 Tamil Muslims, known as Lebbai, lived in the district, mainly in coastal towns where they prospered as merchants and artisans.[36]

Along almost a hundred miles of mostly flat coastal plain, stretching south along the Gulf of Mannar and around Kaniya Kumari (Cape Comorin) and reaching inland to the ridges of the Western Ghats—an area roughly the size of the Netherlands—the district of *Tiru-nel-veli* or 'Sacred Rice Paddy'[37] was in the process of again becoming one of the more prosperous agrarian economies of South India. Even its poorest people enjoyed relatively higher standards of living than was normal in many areas to the north (especially in Andhra or Bihar). Upper classes, consisting of Vellalars, Brahmans, Chettiyars, and other dominant communities, controlled agrarian lands in one or more of the almost 1,500 villages. With such a hold on the political economy, they were almost invariably related to other influential or ruling lords of the land. These, whether wealthy landholders, magnates, petty officials, temple managers, scholars, scribes, priests, bankers, merchant traders, or simply more numerous 'sturdy yeomen' cultivators who directed the work of landless labourers in the fields, made up over half of the population.[38] Less than a dozen dominant magnates (*mahajans*) could be described as petty princes or substantial landholders—descendants of those *zamindars* or *palaiyakkarars* whom Company regiments had crushed during the last battles that had taken place at the end of the previous century, *c.*1801–3, and that had ended with the establishment of a final and permanent *pax Indica* of the Raj.[39]

From his headquarters in Palaiyamkottai, where a large and graceful sanctuary was soon erected, Rhenius became a focal point for inspired Tamil Christian leaders. Aroused by his charismatic gifts, they resumed the massive campaign of conversion that had begun two decades earlier. With systematic thoroughness, a strategy was devised for bringing the message of the Gospel to every corner of the district and to every segment of society. The plan, laid out like a military campaign, was that no person

[36] Ibid.

[37] *MOR*, 236: 'hedge of sacred rice.'

[38] Ibid. More detailed descriptions of the social structure are to be found in Caldwell's *Political and General History* and in the *Tinnevelly Manual*. I have in hand manuscript district records, including annual *jamabandi* (land revenue) reports and the multifarious concerns of the Company's government for the entire period. Some idea of what these contain may be gained from the *Guide to the Tinnevelly District Records* (Madras, 1934), which covers the period up to 1835.

[39] *MOR*. See Caldwell's chapters, pp. 194–231, on the 'Last Poligar War' in his *General History*.

should be denied an opportunity to make a choice nor a chance to come to a decision with respect to becoming a Christian. As the Christian message, whether by word of mouth or by printed tract, was taken into every hamlet, chains of couriers and messengers maintained frequent contacts between local Tamil Christian congregations—a virtual postal system for keeping lines of communication open. But attempts to distribute tracts within the Company's sepoy regiments, on the other hand, brought a severe official reprimand and strict orders for this to cease. Meetings were regularly held near the premises of every large *pukka* temple (*pagoda*) and every large bazaar, especially during festivals and fairs, for those who might be curious. Rhenius himself continually engaged in good-natured discourses and intellectual discussions with local Brahman thinkers on distinctions between their beliefs and the Gospel message. A number of them became friends and provided endowments for new schools. Whether in his house or in his tent or in his palanquin, he kept himself available for conversation with any and all who came to talk with him. The respectable and scholarly gentry in Tirunelveli town (pop. 23,000), both Brahman, and non-Brahman became accustomed to regular (often weekly) discussions and debates with him.[40]

   The impact of this steady and ceaseless campaign led by Tamil leaders whom Rhenius trained was to be profound. Among these leaders, such names as David Pillai Asirvatham, John Devasagayam, Daniel Mukandar, and Savarirayan Pillai became prominent. As a result, from 1820 to 1838, and then on to the end of the century, fresh outbreaks of mass conversion continued and occurred across the length and breadth of Tirunelveli country. While people from Nadar (aka Shanar) villages remained the most susceptible, some converts also came from landholding Vellalar families and from other communities. As in the earlier mass movement at the end of the previous century, whole villages or substantial segments of large villages turned Christian. When this happened, images of village deities would sometimes be destroyed and village temples would be transformed into prayer school halls. New 'villages of refuge' were established, very similar to those founded during the Poligar (*Palaiyakkarar*) War thirty years earlier. Some of these villages were substantially endowed, sometimes under *ināṃ* tenures. One of the earliest of these was Dohnavur—named after a Swedish-Prussian count whose bequest was only one of several inspired by

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[40] *MOR*, 195–293, 230–6, 259. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 30–8, gives an account of this campaign, showing how Tamil evangelists, called 'Pilgrims', were sent out two by two. Rhenius compared them, in military terms, to 'sappers and miners' who dig and undermine foundations and prepare detonations of explosive charges that bring down walls of a fortress. His memoir showed how this was done. *REH*, 205.

letters which Rhenius sent to his fellow believers in Germany.[41] (Regular contributions, along with an occasional letter, also came from the monarch of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II.)

In 1830, an assemblage of Tirunelveli congregations founded the Dharma Sangam or Philanthropic Society. Organized during a time of severe persecution, when landed elites were throwing every sort of obstacle in the way of the new believers, its purpose was to show converts that they could not only help one another but could also strengthen their 'Gospel Witness' by setting up a permanent endowment fund for the purchase of lands for new 'villages of refuge' where new Christians might, without hindrance, work and worship in peace.[42] A year and a half before Rhenius' death, another such endowment for land was made by David Pillai Asirvatham, a prominent local Vellalar Christian leader. At a special *kal-natu* ('planting foot' or 'founding') ceremony, held on 15 December 1836, this new village of refuge was christened '*Suvisesha-puram*' ('Gospel-village').[43] By the time of that ceremony, the number of new Christians within new congregations had grown to 11,186.[44] A census two decades later showed that membership in non-Catholic congregations had risen to 46,047. Paul Appasamy, a century later, would write that numbers of new converts grew to over 3,000 in 1825, to 6,243 in 205 villages; and to 8,107 in 1830. 'In many cases people of their own accord cast away their idols, destroyed their temples or converted them into places of Christian worship.'[45] Numbers of Catholic Tamil Christians within Tirunelveli district, at that time, were roughly the same—most of them being among the Paravar Christian community that Tamils with Francis Xavier had strengthened 300 years earlier.

The real significance of the revolutionary movement which re-emerged while Rhenius was still working in Tirunelveli lay in the strength of the internal and institutionalized support structures generated by Tirunelveli congregations themselves. Noting that the system of working among these people was, as a whole, 'greatly superior' to anything previously done and

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[41] *MOR*, 329. Count Dohna heard of the plight of new converts in Tirunelveli from Karl Rhenius, and reached into his own pocket to make an endowment for this purpose. This village, located in the western part of the district, not far from the rugged outliers and ridges of the Western Ghats, would eventually become a centre made famous by Amy Carmichael.

[42] *MOR*, 252–4, 271–2, 275–9, 282–7; 328 ff. This correspondence is peppered with references to persecution and various efforts to cope with it. CMS manuscript records in my possession (on microfilm: 1820–60) are filled with far too many individual items to be listed here.

[43] *MOR*, 361 ff. It was founded on 2 June. Cf. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 4, 7, 51–2, 75, 105–6, 128, 138. *Proceedings of the South India Missionary Conference, Held at Ootacamund, April 19th–May 5th, 1858* (Madras, 1858), 15 (PSIMC).

[44] *MOR*, 242–3, 280, 559–60. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 67.

[45] *MOR*, 554. E. Sargent, 'The South Tinnevelly Mission, Church Missionary Society', in *PSIMC*, 14. This gives comparative figures for each decade. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 38, 39 (statistics: pp. 73–4).

that their 'views of Church government and worship . . . were in general those of the English Dissenters', Robert Caldwell would later pay tribute to the far-sighted and sensitive leadership displayed by Rhenius:

He was, so far as I am aware, the first Missionary . . . by whom caste was in any degree practically repressed,[46] female education systematically promoted, and societies established among native Christians for religious and charitable purposes. It is also remarkable that the practice of assembling the people of every Christian village morning and evening for united prayer . . . was first introduced by Rhenius.[47]

Each congregation was governed by its own *panchayat*. If a village were totally Christian, its congregational *panchayat* and its village *panchayat* would be merged into a single institution, with its pastor (catechist) and its teacher (schoolmaster) sitting with the headman and/or other elders as village officers. In this way conflicts could be resolved and standards of behaviour maintained without resort to outside authority. From the very beginning, following the Halle pattern, a system of universal education was instituted within each congregation. Each person was continuously drilled in the main truths of the faith. All members of each congregation, old and young, were expected to memorize and frequently repeat compilations of scriptural doctrines and duties.[48] 'Great caution was used so as not to let people suppose that conversion to Christianity meant only a change of profession.'[49] Small groups would examine each other to make sure that none was ignorant of the basics. New believers usually did not receive baptism or communion until several months, sometimes years, after their conversion; and then only after rigorous testing in rudiments of the Gospel.[50]

More formal, overarching structures served to draw scattered congregations together. By encouraging and strengthening each other, congregations sought to form a united front in the face of common problems, including hostility from the world of non-Christians surrounding them. Strong emphasis was placed upon voluntary effort and indigenous support. Since leaders were soon in very short supply, a training institution (seminary or

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[46] On the question of caste, Rhenius clashed with Vedanayakam Sastriar, who stoutly defended the cultural perspectives of an earlier generation (e.g. from Ziegenbalg to Schwartz and Bishop Heber). In this respect, Rhenius reflected the more radical and egalitarian outlook of post-Revolutionary Europe and Britain. Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India*, 142–7.

[47] Caldwell, *Lectures*, 52–3. REH, 226–7. Caldwell is incorrect on the origins of daily morning and evening prayers, in each congregation. This was Tranquebar custom maintained, often with a bell, for well over a century.

[48] Caldwell, *Lectures*, 53, 62–9. PSIMC, 13.

[49] PSIMC, 13. Also see p. 12. MOR, 220–1, 263–93, especially 286 ff., has three of Rhenius' writings on this subject, and on questions of genuine conversion; also see pp. 317–19, 352–5, 550–5.

[50] PSIMC, 13. MOR, 219 ff.

'preparandi' school) was established.[51] Gifted young men were recruited who, after careful indoctrination and testing, were sent to serve as pastors and teachers. Since initially very few Nadar Christian converts were literate, since basic schooling for children of converts received higher priority, and since adequate numbers of able teachers could not be recruited from among early converts, there was no hesitation in turning to non-Christians—Brahmans or Vellalars—and also to Catholics, to staff rapidly proliferating new schools. So long as curriculum and teaching materials were carefully selected and were Christian, or at least not anti-Christian, there was little concern.[52]

In four distinctive features, this renewed conversion movement replicated the Halle model that Schwartz had brought south fifty years earlier. First, pairs of Christian 'Pilgrims', similar to the 'Helpers' whom Schwartz had inspired, went out into the countryside. As itinerant preachers their task was both to sustain old believers and to encourage new believers. Second, every village congregation had its own school, which was served by its own teacher-cum-pastor (catechist). Third, as had happened at Thanjavur, all preachers, teachers, and pastors had to gather at Palaiyamkottai at least once each month, for careful and continuous ongoing training and instruction on how to lead congregations and teach in their schools. And, finally, as had been done since as far back as Schultz and Schwartz (and even as done by Francis Xavier), a bell sounded in each village at dawn and at dusk, to call the faithful to prayer and praise.[53]

By 1835, 261 congregations (with 11,186 members, from 3,225 families) were enrolling 2,882 children (159 of them girls) in over 100 primary schools. In this connection, Rhenius' wife, a Jaffna-born lady of Dutch extraction who was fluent in Tamil, ran schools for girls and taught basic literacy and home health to women, thereby setting a pattern for missionary wives that would be followed throughout India. Since hundreds of villages required more teachers than were available among converts within the ranks of new congregations, both Catholic and non-Christian teachers were employed, some of whom turned to the new faith. Recruitment of non-Christian teachers and enrolment of non-Christian pupils were seen as a means of bringing people to the Gospel. From among these two secondary schools up to forty of the most gifted youths were selected for leadership training, as pastors or teachers, in the seminary which Rhenius and Schmidt had

[51] Actually, these can be attributed to James Hough as much as, if not more than, to Rhenius. *REH*, 202–3. It was almost one of the last things he did before his health gave way. *MOR*, 208–12, 356–8, 561.

[52] In this, he followed Hough, much to the dismay of CMS authorities. *MOR*, ch. XIV, pp. 390 ff. *PSIMC*, 11.

[53] Neill, *History of Chirstianity in India*, 219.

established.[54] As early as 1830, fully ordained Tamil Christian pastors, Revd David Pillai Asirvatham (mentioned above) and Revd John Devasahayam among them, were taking over more and more positions of leadership and responsibility at successively higher levels of church administration. Devasahayam was the first Tamil missionary to stand beside Rhenius in a role comparable to that which Clorinda, Sathyanathan, and Sundarandam had occupied within the original leadership of the Palaiyamkottai congregation between 1790 and 1806.

But pastoral catechists and schoolteachers were only part of the institutional infrastructure. Beyond them were various voluntary associations and a growing new cultural ethos. Reference has already been made to the Dharma Sangam or Native Philanthropic Society (f. 2 June 1830).[55] The size of this endowment for beleaguered congregations increased steadily.[56] (This fund exceeded 13,320 rupees in 1858.) By 1831, the Native Bible and Tract Society (and Press) of Tirunelveli, which had been founded in 1822, had printed 45,000 tracts and enjoyed an income surplus of 1,237 rupees.[57] Other societies, such as the Shanti Sangam (Peace Society), the Suviseshafanam ('Gospel-fanam', or Poor Fund), the Widows' Fund, and the Native Missionary Society, whose members were known as *Desanthari* or 'Pilgrims', were sending out local missionaries to villages where no conversions had yet occurred.[58] Printing presses later set up in 1838 at Nagarkoil and in 1847 at Palaiyamkottai vastly accelerated the production of teaching and worship materials for schools, congregations, and evangelistic activities. Eventually, a 'Heathen Friends' Society' was formed by local people, the aim being to assure non-Christians that communal enmity was not a proper form of Christian behaviour. By means of such vigorous voluntary associations as these, mainly Nadar Christian congregations of Tirunelveli developed a sturdy sense of independence and self-reliance. This independence was manifest in many ways, both small and large. Perhaps its most important feature was an almost total absence, at least during Rhenius' time, of dependence upon 'colonial' (European, 'foreign', or 'Western') cultural resources, motif, or style. The cultural idiom of these congregations, 'Pietistic' or 'Evangelical' as they undoubtedly were, was almost completely Tamil[59]—as manifest in art, architecture, poetry, or music. As inspired by

[54] *PSIMC*, 12–14. Caldwell and Appasamy give the same figures. *MOR*, 357.

[55] *MOR*, 376.

[56] *PSIMC*, 15. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 75, names thirteen *Dharma Sangam* villages and ten CMS villages in existence by 1839.

[57] *PSIMC*, 16. *MOR*, 231, 417, 472. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 32–3, 47, 57, 105–6.

[58] *PSIMC*, 15–16. *MOR*, 473. *Centenary History*, 54, 56, 76 (p. 107). Mullens, *Missions in South India*, 116–18.

[59] *REH*, 13–14, mentions *Kavirayans*, poets in the Palaiyamkottai congregation: e.g. John Devasahayam, a relative of Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar, who had accompanied Schwartz

Vedanayakam Sastriar, the native son who had gained such distinction in Thanjavur, this newly emerging Tamil Evangelical culture clearly and dramatically would later reach its pinnacle of achievement in the publication of *Rakshany Yatrikam* by H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827–1900). This Tamil adaptation of *Pilgrim's Progress* was the work of a lifetime. In over 4,000 verses, it expressed depths of Christian thought and feeling within the classical idiom of the ancient *Sangam* poets.[60] That Tamil Christian writers could make such a contribution to their own culture must surely silence voices which have ceaselessly charged that Christianity in India is merely a product of 'alien' influences and of 'cultural imperialism' from the West.[61] Some in the West would question whether the 'Gothic' architecture, with enormous structures and lofty spires pointing heavenward, that congregations at such places as Megnanapuram and Nazareth erected with their own hands, in competition with each other, could truly be seen as 'Indian' or 'indigenous'. The retort made by local leaders was that, as former slaves, Shanars (aka Nadars) were not about to copy the styles of temples used by their former masters and were only too glad to find, adopt, or copy new forms for the expression of their faith in buildings that they had erected for their Christ[62]

Movements within the Princely State of Travancore (Tiruvancodu)

To the south and west of Tirunelveli were domains that belonged to the Maharaja of Travancore. With its capital at Tiruvanthapuram (Trivandrum), this kingdom consisted of an aggregation of tiny principalities that had been merged into a traditional royal polity. On the frontier between the two regions, between the Tamil-speaking east and the Malayalam-speaking west, lay the spine of the Ghats. These dramatic mountain ranges, diminishing in size until they sink into the ground as they near the ocean at Kaniya Kumari, until no barrier between east and west remains, also served as a cultural frontier that cut off Kerala from the rest of India. Until 1799 and for a few decades thereafter, the entire tip of the peninsula, including the

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back to Thanjavur, who, as already indicated above, contributed so many hymns and lyrics which are still in existence.

[60] Dennis D. Hudson, 'The Life and Times of H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827–1900): A Study in the Encounter of Tamil Sri Vaishnava Hinduism and Evangelical Protestant Christianity in Nineteenth Century Tirunelveli District' (Claremont, Calif.: Claremont Graduate School and University Center, Ph.D. dissertation, 1970; © University Microfilms).

[61] A. J. Appasamy, *Tamil Christian Poet* (London, 1966), is a small, readily procurable paperback on the life and writings of H. A. Krishna Pillai.

[62] For treatment of this subject, see Susan B. Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V. S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 244, 261–2, 354.

eastern or Tamil-speaking district of Nagarkoil, also lay under the highly Brahmanical/*Sanskriti* rule of the Travancore Maharaja. By 1758, a power-ful monarch, Martanda Varma, had succeeded, with the help of mercenary forces under the command of a Dutch soldier of fortune named Eustache Benoit de Lannoy, in subduing scores of petty princes and bringing nearly all, with the exception of Cochin, into a centralized political system, thereby making himself into the Kulasekhara Emperor (*Perumal*) of all Kerala.[63]

Nowhere were the strictures of the caste system, as epitomized in the Brahmanical categories of *varnāshramadharma*, more severe. Despite the presence of substantial numbers of Thomas Christian gentry, as well as ancient Jewish and Muslim communities, Brahmans dominated virtually every aspect of life; moreover, orthodox rulers of the Raja Varma lineage were both manipulated by and duly submissive to their Brahman ministers. Polluting *āvarna* communities, such non-slave castes as Nadars (formerly Shanars), Arrians, Izhavas, and Kuravars, and such slave castes as Pulaiyars and Paraiyars and many others, were kept in conditions of servility so severe that their status could hardly be distinguished from total slavery—a harsh situation within all dominions subject to Trivandrum (aka Tiruvantha-puram) and the throne of its Kulasekhara Perumal.

The arrival of Evangelical Christianity in Travancore began with Mahar-asan in 1799. Coming from a respectable Vellalar ('Sudra') family in Mayi-ladi, not far over the rugged foothills from Nagarkoil, he went on a *sannyasi* pilgrimage to the great shrine and temple at Chidambaram in search of spiritual fulfilment. But he found the place filled with avarice, corruption, fraud, and wanton vice. Bitterly disappointed and disenchanted with his life as a *sannyasi*, he stopped in Thanjavur while on his way home in order to visit his sister and brother-in-law. With them he went to their Christian place of worship. Standing outside the door and listening to the joyful singing, praying, and penetrating truths that explained the Gospel, he became so deeply moved that, with 'heart rent asunder', he decided to stay a little longer and to learn more about this new Veda. Johann Caspar Kohlhoff (b. 1762 in Tranquebar), another of Schwartz's 'adopted sons' who had grown up and received his training in Thanjavur, was then pastor at St Peter's.[64] He devoted himself to Maharasan, gently answering

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[63] Mark de Lannoy, *The Kulasekhara Perumals of Travancore: History and State Formation in Travancore from 1671 to 1758* (Leiden: School of African, Asian, and Amerindian Studies, 1997).

[64] C. M. Agur, *History of the Protestant Church in Travancore* (Madras: Albion Press, 1903), 13–19. Promised at birth, Kohlhoff was claimed at the age of 8 by Schwartz who took him to Thanjavur for training. There he was ordained in 1787 and groomed, like Vedanayakam Sastri, to take over the work of Schwartz. Numerous other siblings and grandchildren had distinguished careers in India, one grandson becoming Chief Secretary to the Travancore government, and another serving the Cochin government. Some of the family remained in India for two centuries.

questions and leading him to the new faith, finally baptizing him and christening him 'Vedamanickam' ('Gem of Sacred Knowledge'). After several months of basic training in Scripture, Vedamanickam finally made his way back to his home to Mayiladi, again travelling as a mendicant beggar in order to avoid brigands and robbers. What he carried back into the territories of Travancore, along with a Tamil New Testament, were the same seeds of German Pietism that, after landing in Tranquebar in 1706 and in Thanjavur in 1731, had first been planted in Tirunelveli some thirty years earlier. When his family and village, having given him up for dead, saw Vedamanickam, they were awestruck. The story he told and the Gospel of the new Veda which he read to them had a profound impact. While some in the family firmly rejected what he had to say, others were glad to receive his words and soon came under instruction. Within relatively few years, his following had grown to several hundred believers. But local landlords became alarmed; and when Vedamanickam received death threats, he fled for his life.[65]

This crisis arising from such threats brought Vedamanickam to the realization that he would need help if his work was to survive. He also recognized his own need for more training, and for pastors and teachers to tend the seven congregations that had been established. Returning to Thanjavur, he met Wilhelm Tobias Ringeltaube. This zealous young German missionary had come to India with support from the LMS and had recently begun to work among Nadar Christians who lived in Nagarkoil. Ringeltaube accompanied Vedamanickam back to his home village of Mayiladi with the intention of helping him in building schools and training local pastors. But again, within the Brahman-dominated and steeply structured agrarian caste system of Travancore, there was no room for allowing any latitude to Christians who were 'soil slaves'. The very existence of this small Christian community gave offence. The ruling caste people, including Thomas Christians, Nayars, and Brahmans, were not prepared to allow such low-caste people to take any kind of liberties. Since most low-caste people, whether Christian or not, were 'soil slaves' and, as such, were viewed as extremely polluting, even the shadow of a polluting *āvarna* person falling on a Brahman had been a capital offence. That these new Christians dared to openly declare their faith was enough for them to be accused of subversion and theft, and for them to be beaten and deprived of meagre possessions.

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[65] By 1818, two years after the disappearance of Ringeltaube, when LMS missionaries began to seriously work with this community, the number of these Christians, already at about 2,000, called for places of worship large enough to hold them. Penelope Carson, 'Christianity, Colonialism, and Hinduism in Kerala', in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 146; and Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*, ii. 222–7.

Sons were taken away from their parents for corvée labour; and daughters were taken away for worse purposes. When women became Christians and then, for the sake of self-respect, dared to cover their bosoms with clothing, in violation of strictures that forbade them from trying to show such symbols of respectability, they were severely beaten.[66] *Pukka* houses made of brick and tile, instead of mud and thatch, had never been allowed to such people, and were torn down or burned. Worse still, newly built school chapels, also made of *pukka* materials, were also burned down, and their pastor-teachers imprisoned. Attempts to be allowed to celebrate Sabbath days off from work for the sake for worship were also denied—such an allowance being viewed as a violation of both custom and duty (*mamool* and *dharma*).

Despite, and perhaps even because of such impediments, this small community of low-caste Christians continued to grow. Maharasan Veda-manickam, the person who had led this movement for many years from its beginning, first as a catechist preacher and teacher but then, after 23 January 1816, as a fully seasoned, trained, and ordained minister and missionary leader, grew old in its service. Under his supervision at that time, serving 747 formally baptized Christians and untold unbaptized Christians, was a staff of twelve preacher/teachers. He was joined by two nephews, whose Christian names were Gnānamuthu and Gnānapragāsam. Both served as ministers and evangelists, the younger doing so for forty-eight years. Eventually, as in Tirunelveli, after years of slow incubation and modest growth, massive movements of conversion broke out in several communities, among both non-slave castes (e.g. Nadars (formerly Shanars), Arrians, Izhavas, and Kuravars) and slave castes (e.g. Pulaiyars and Paraiyars,). Between 1819 and 1820, for example, after 2,000 Nadars registered as regular Christian worshippers in Nagarkoil, a stone building was erected for their worship and a seminary for training preachers and teachers. Two missionaries, Charles Mead and Charles Mault, arrived with their wives to develop institutional support structures; and plans were laid for the building of a hospital. Thousands of new converts claimed that their new faith promised liberation—especially freedom from the fear of demons and freedom from various illnesses, as well as a new spirit of dignity that promised eventual emancipation from bondage and oppression. Undaunted by persecution and violence, new converts came in crowds to the new faith, 'voluntarily demolishing with their own hands their shrines and idols, and some of them bringing their gods of gold, silver, brass, and wood, and the

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[66] Robert Hardgrave, 'The Breast-Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 5: 2 (1968), 171–87.

instruments of idolatry which they surrendered . . . So mightily grew the Word of God.'[67]

While all of these movements were inspired and led by leaders within the respective castes in which conversions occurred, virtually all supporting infrastructures—schools to provide them with access to literacy, as well as local teacher-preachers (catechists), etc.—were reinforced by missionaries of the LMS, CMS, and other societies. Amidst a steady drum-beat of incidents, protests against oppression, accompanied by violent reactions and martyrdoms, events which were followed by formal petitions to the Maharaja and the British Resident, new Christians asserted their 'rights'— something never before heard. As a consequence, the Tirunelveli pattern of established separate colonies, or 'Christian villages', was followed wherever this was possible.

Each and every such assertion of freedom was itself viewed by entrenched elites as a fresh violation of both customary and religious and social traditions. As such, each event would almost inevitably lead to another and even larger-scale series of disturbances, violence, and occasional deaths. Finally, in 1855, after newspapers had reported such events in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta and mounting pressures from the Madras government, the Government of India, and the Court of Directors increased, slavery was formally abolished and some civil disabilities were relaxed.[68] The plight of low-caste people continued to be taken up and aired in newspaper reports; and these attracted ever wider circles of attention among growing numbers of social reformers in India. In 1859, the Governor of Madras Presidency, Sir Charles Trevelyan, son-in-law of Thomas Macaulay who had served as secretary to the Governor-General, Lord Bentinck, nearly thirty years earlier, requested explanations. The Maharaja and Brahman-Nayar gentry blamed work being done by missionaries for the growing civil unrest and violence. Yet, even as the progress of Christian conversions and growing demands of the lower castes increased, these in turn brought stronger reactions, both social and religious.[69] Local leaders within each Christian community, despite support from missionaries, also became more assertive, and sometimes resentful of missionary paternalism.

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[67] Neill, *History of Christianity in India*, 227. Samuel Mateer, *'The Land of Charity': A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People, with Especial Reference to Missionary Labour* (London: J. Snow and Co., 1871), 277–8, 281.

[68] J. W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and Peoples Movements in Kerala: 1850–1898* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), 159.

[69] George Oommen, 'Strength of Tradition and Weakness of Communication: Kerala Dalit Conversion', in Geoffrey A. Oddie (ed.), *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800–1900* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), 79–95.

During the later nineteenth century, as levels of literacy rapidly increased within the kingdoms of Cochin and Travancore, the numbers and kinds of Christian movements also multiplied, so that by the twentieth century there was hardly any Christian movement occurring anywhere in the Christian world—whether Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical, Protestant, or Pentecostal—which did not find itself taking root in what is now Kerala.

Conversion Movements Further North

What had begun to happen among *āvarna* peoples of Tirunelveli and Travancore provides a clue, if not a pattern or template, for understanding what later took place, in successive stages, in other parts of Tamil and Telugu country, parts of Kerala and Mysore, and other parts of the entire continent, all the way up to the Punjab, during the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The movements that occurred among *āvarna* ('colourless') peoples of lowest castes and among aboriginal (*adivāsi*) peoples in the north, especially in the north-east among the Nagas, Khasis, Garos, and other tribal peoples along frontiers, all seem to have had a similar kind of origin and trajectory. As new waves of conversion occurred and brought new Christian communities into existence in other parts of India, educational, medical, and social infrastructures that followed were provided by missionaries, many if not most of them being non-Anglican if not non-British. One can see a gradual but steady northward shifting to communities of the very lowest castes who hitherto had never been touched by the Gospel. Scores if not hundreds of separate peoples, each distinct from the next, cannot all be examined in detail. Yet, some of them can be touched upon, albeit unevenly, if only to show how the pattern repeated itself, if sometimes with much less dramatic magnitude.

As the similar movements shifted steadily northward, at least two if not more factors may be laid down as postulates. First, as rapid increases in literacy among Tamil Christians, Vellalar and Nadar alike, not to mention others, opened up opportunities for employment outside agrarian environments from which they sought to escape, an ever widening dispersion of Tamil Christians occurred. This seems to have begun with their entering military service, then entering other forms of government service, and finally entering into professions. Wherever Tamil Christians moved, they themselves spearheaded the spread of the Gospel, soon moving beyond small congregations that they organized for themselves. Second, after the passage of the Company's Charter Renewal Act of 1833, the doors of admission to India were thrown open to non-British missionaries from America and Europe, as well as Australia and Canada. Thus, as the floodgates of missionaries opened and ever larger numbers came to India, newcomers found

fields of service further and further to the north and west, as well as east, until the entire continent was filled with *mufassal* stations occupied by one kind of missionary or another. Thirdly, newer British societies, both Anglican and nonconformist—such as the CMS, LMS, BMS, MMS, WMMS—also arrived and, together with the older societies, quickly moved their missionaries northwards to fill up places in the countryside that had hitherto not been penetrated. As new waves of conversion occurred and brought new Christian communities into existence in other parts of India, educational, medical, and social infrastructures were provided by these newer missionaries, who took up work among the least privileged and heretofore least touched segments of society, both *āvarna* and *adivāsi* (aboriginal/tribal peoples). (This subject is explored in Chapter 14.)

Movements in Other Tamil Areas

All these new movements occurred even as movements in Tirunelveli and Travancore continued to gain momentum during each decade throughout the entire century and beyond. Thus, fresh outbreaks of conversion that occurred within districts to the north and west of Thanjavur, especially among the Paraiyar and Madhari communities in Tiruchirapalli (aka Trichinopoly) and in Coimbatore, drew the attention of Wesleyan Methodist missionaries from Britain and Church of Sweden (Evangelical Lutheran) missionaries respectively. To the north were LMS missionaries and to the south were missionaries of the American Madurai Mission, each serving very similar kinds of *āvarna* peoples. Paraiyars—from which the word 'pariah', meaning 'outcast', 'ownerless', or 'worthless', entered the English vocabulary, often being applied to a scavenging 'pye-dog'—were migrant labourers who ranged far and wide in search of menial work. Pallars, somewhat similar in character, were more concentrated in villages around the coastal port of Nagapatnam (aka Negapatam). Madharis, like Chakkiliyars, were 'leather workers' who, since they worked with carcasses of dead animals, were extremely polluting, even though what they did was required within each village economy. Since, as defiling 'touchers-of-leather', they were also drummers whose presence was required for festivals and processions, their positions were also anomalous and even contradictory. From humble beginnings, with small numbers of converts in the 1820s, numbers of Christians increased very slowly for over eighty years. During this period, as had happened in Thanjavur two centuries earlier, a small number of high-caste, often Brahman converts survived heavy persecution that, in some instances, ended in martyrdom. Such persecution, beyond the embarrassment, mortification, and outrage suffered by immediate family members, was reinforced by newly rising forms of anti-Christian revivalism.

Two noteworthy Brahman converts who survived were John (aka Naryananaswami) and Theophilus Subramanyam. The first, after being severely beaten and then escaping to a mission boarding school in Trichy, was kidnapped by his friends and relatives, and taken off to the great temple at Rameswaram where he was subjected to rigorous de-polluting purification ceremonies and given a new sacred thread—all to no avail since he soon escaped again. When he boldly stood his ground and told a crowd how he had become a Christian, his relatives declared him 'dead'. The second suffered even more severely, with thrashing being followed by branding with red-hot irons, being tied to a pillar to endure the Indian sun for a full day, and escaping execution only when a sister stealthily untied him and urged him to escape. After rigorous theological training, he became a leader in the mass movements that began to break out in 1913 and gained momentum in the decades that followed.[70]

The mass movement among Paraiyars in villages around the town of Darapuram, where they were locally known as Adi-Dravida, began after Alagan was baptized 'Abraham' and proclaimed 'Father of the Faithful'. Following his example, Kuppan was baptized 'Yesdasan' ('Slave of Christ'), and his son Nachimuthu was baptized Vedanayagam ('Lord of Knowledge'). At a meeting called by the caste *panchayat*, a decision was made for the Paraiyar community within their village of Mannargudi. A Brahman Christian, Paul Rangaramanjam, was then invited to visit the new converts and a teacher was sent to help them set up a special school for the new Christians. Despite persecution, when non-Christian relatives witnessed the remarkable transformations which occurred: men and women, while sitting separately, worshipped together and sang newly learned lyrics together; transformed behaviour, dress, speech, and eating habits; and rapidly acquired literacy—they became attracted by the improved prospects that conversion promised. Women began to wear *cholis* (blouses), ceased eating carcasses, stopped drinking toddy, ceased using foul words, and destroyed idols in their homes. Habits of personal cleanliness became visible. The entire community gained a new sense of dignity, self-respect, and pride. The movement which had started slowly began to gain speed, spreading to more and more villages (too many to name here). When persecution resulted in many losing employment and suffering economic hardship, many Paraiyar Christians braved the hazards of leaving homes that they and their ancestors had never before left, to find work elsewhere, both in

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[70] Sundararaj Manickam, *The Social Setting of Christian Conversion in South India: The Impact of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries . . . with Special Reference to the Harijan Communities of the Mass Movement Area, 1820–1847* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), 74–7.

the country and overseas. The nearest destinations for many were the tea plantations in the Annamalai and Nilagiri 'Hills' (in reality mountains that were part of the Ghats). Once they arrived there, having braved jungles infested with dangerous beasts, pestilence, and fevers, not to mention cold and wet such as they had never known, they found that most of the subordinate staffs—such as clerks, overseers, engineers, tea cultivators—under whom they worked were also Christians. The only difference was that, in the hills, Christians of many varieties were often jumbled together, with Anglicans, Catholics, Mar Thoma, Methodists, Congregationalists, Reformed, Brethren, Salvationists, and many from other denominations often forgetting their denominations and doctrinal distinctions, and many even worshipping under a single roof.[71]

In 1923, the movement took a new turn when Madharis, with encouragement and support from Swedish missionaries, launched a mass movement of their own, parallel to that of the Paraiyars. Christians of one community sometimes helped Christians of the other, even though they never allowed themselves to intermingle or to intermarry, and usually had separate church buildings and programmes. Many of the experiences of this community followed the patterns of growth and enlargement enjoyed by other mass movements among *āvarna* peoples, resulting in the same kinds of upward and outward mobility and self-respect. Responses to conversions of dominant castes, especially Gounder landlords, were severe: stones were thrown, cattle killed, sheds burned, and access to well-water and work denied. Since situations of Madharis were more precarious, and they were tied down to each village, it was much more difficult for them to survive or for their children to attend school: child labour was needed just for survival. Madhari Christians found that their missionary help and support, as much as this was possible, came from Church of Sweden Evangelical Lutherans, rather than from the Wesleyan Methodists or the LMA. All in all, mass movements in Tiruchirapalli and Coimbatore territories, between 1910 and 1970, came to over 50,000 *āvarna* Christians. Since then numbers have multiplied even further, so that there has so far been little slackening in the process of conversions.[72]

These are but two of many other similar movements that were taking place simultaneously in different districts. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was not a district, not a major town of any significance that did not have some sort of growing Christian presence, in which one or

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[71] Ibid. 80–8.
[72] Gunnel Cederlöf, 'Social Mobilization among People Competing at the Bottom Level of Society: The Presence of Missions in Rural South India, ca. 1900–1950', in Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India*, 336–56.

more kinds of Christians and supporting missionary institutions had not established a foothold. The presence of missionary stations, with large compounds within which there were substantial 'bungalows', schools, places of worship, orchards, and wells—what in Muslim quarters would be called *muhallahs* and what others would decry as 'missionary colonialism'—would reach its high noon by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Mass Movements within Telugu Country

Next to what happened in Tirunelveli and Travancore, in no region of India were there larger mass movements than among the Madigas and Malas of Telugu country (in what is now Andhra Pradesh). Jesuit missionaries had established a firm base at Pfarangipuram, a substantial Kamma Christian community near Guntur (and Kondavidu), in the sixteenth century, and had turned it over to the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP) in 1777. Kamma Catholic churches were revived and expanded even before the Jesuits returned in the 1830s. While LMS missionaries George Cran and Augustus Des Granges arrived in Vizagapatam in 1805, there seems to be no question of the leadership by Anandarayer, a Desastha (Maratha) Brahman Christian who joined them in 1809. It was he who translated portions of the Tamil Bible into Telugu.[73] By the 1840s, many different kinds of missionary societies were becoming established in various coastal (*circari*) districts and also in inland districts of Rayaluseema. Among them were American Baptists of the 'Lone Star' Mission. Centred initially in Nellore, they soon spread all the way from Madras to Guntur, Hyderabad, and towns of Rayaluseema. American Lutherans, starting in Guntur, spread all the way from Tirupati to Rajahmundry. Plymouth Brethren formed the Godavari Delta Mission. A substantial CMS presence, already strong in Madras, began to establish institutional structures at Masulipatnam (or Bandar), near the mouth of the Krishna, during the same period. But, initially none of the many missionaries made much of an impact, except for an occasional convert and the setting up of schools. All of these movements, as they began to develop, were inspired and led, like their predecessors to the south, by indigenous agents who, having been influenced by Telugu Christians, went back to evangelize their own people.

Movements among Telugus, beginning in 1865, replicated what had happened further south, in Tanjore, Tirunelveli, and Travancore. After a thirty-year period of incubation, during which a small number

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[73] N. C. Sargent, *The Dispersion of the Tamil Church* (revised and enlarged edn. New Delhi: SPCK, 1962 [Madras: CLS, 1940]), 36. Benjamin Schultz had already made a translation between 1728 and 1743.

of Telugu preachers and teachers were trained, a large explosion of conversions occurred. This can be traced to the spiritual quest for dignity, meaning, and truth of one man. Verragunthla Periah, a Madiga from a small village ghetto (*cheri*) at Talakondapadu, about forty miles south-west of Ongole, refused to engage in polluting, occupations such as leather working and menial labour. After being initiated into *rajayoga* by an upper-caste *guru*, he himself also became a *guru*. He first learned of the Christian message from a converted relative. After hearing the Gospel message explained by an itinerant Telugu preacher, he became so totally enthralled with the new Veda—that placed no restrictions on outcastes (*āvarna jātis*)—that he determined to become a Christian. Initially his village and his wife opposed him, but after a year, she joined him.[74] They went to Ongole to learn more from the American missionary who had just recently settled there. Lyman Jowett was so impressed by their faith that he baptized them. V. Periah, along with T. Rangiah and T. Lakshmiah, were the first members of the Ongole congregation. The Madiga Christian couple soon stirred up interest in their new Veda among members of their *rajayoga* following, by bringing the Telugu preachers to their home village of Talakondapadu. Five days after another newly arrived missionary, John E. Clough, himself visited the village, in January 1867, twenty-eight Madigas were baptized. The new message was then carried into all the villages in the surrounding countryside.[75]

Thus began what would turn out to be one of the most remarkable movements of mass conversion. It accelerated and developed with amazing speed. Periah and Nagama, as a Christian *guru* couple, spent ten years wandering from village to village throughout an area within a radius of eighty miles, telling Madigas that their only hope lay in Christ. In villages where Madigas accepted this message and were baptized, articulate and gifted persons were then sent to Ongole for training as preachers and teachers. As these new leaders became literate, village schools multiplied. As the movement gained strength, no efforts were made to disrupt traditional patterns of governance, each local congregation was led by a *panchayat* of persons who were already acknowledged caste elders. Beyond baptism and communion, only three forms of 'outward' observance were enjoined upon each group of believers: no work on Sunday, no eating of carrion (*tsachina māmsamu*), and no worship of graven images. But such 'public' displays of conviction as these disrupted the political economy of

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[74] J. E. Clough, *Social Christianity in the Orient: The Story of a Man, a Mission and a Movement, written down for him by his wife, Emma Rauschenbusch Clough* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914), 291–8.

[75] A. T. Fishman, *For This Purpose* (Madras: CLS, 1958), 6–9.

each village. Refusal to fulfil traditional obligations—to provide corvée labour for the land upon demand, to work every day of the week, to accept dead cattle as payment for work, as well as to beat drums for ceremonies and processions in honour of local deities—altered the agrarian structure. Hides alone, without meat, fetched a different price. Festival processions for village deities, without Madiga drummers and dancers, upset local religious traditions. Conflict and persecution resulted.

Christianity in and around Ongole became Madiga Christianity. Clough, no longer listened to by 'caste' (*varna*) peoples, was stigmatized for associating with such polluted peoples and became the 'Madiga Missionary'. But it was Periah himself, already an articulate and trained yogic *guru*, who became the true catalyst, 'change agent', and 'broker' for the movement. It was he who was the most effective teacher and preacher, the 'two-language' *dubashi* whose brokering brought this new faith into being among Madigas. The thraldom of his community, already more than they could tolerate, had made them so desperate that they were ready to grasp any opportunity to escape the slave conditions under which they were suffering. Earlier reform efforts, led by Yogi Narsiah and members of a Ramanuja sect, had done nothing to alleviate their suffering. Within two years, there were over 3,000 Madiga Christians in villages around Ongole. During the great famine of 1876–8, when Clough received a 'relief contract' from the government to dig a three-mile segment of the Buckingham Canal, he turned to Madiga Christians, both for foremen and labourers. Other Madigas, knowing that they stood a better chance with him than with others, came to the project site to find work and food. These, in turn, sent back messages to relatives in their home villages both near and far, so that others could come for relief from starvation. In June 1878, after rains came and the famine was over, numbers of Madigas daily clamouring for baptism continued to escalate rapidly—by hundreds and thousands. During one single day in July, 2,222 Madiga men and women were baptized, or a total of 7,513 for the month.[76] As he later reflected on the pattern of these conversions, Clough commented: 'The movement, as it swept over the Madiga community, had picked up the best first—those who were ready to respond to the Christian appeal. Their leaders had made the beginning. Others followed who had been under their direct influence. Then came the wider circle of those with whom there were ties of family relationship. The appeal . . . moved like an avalanche, gathering up as it went along.'[77] By 1900, American Baptist missionaries estimated that the number of Telugu Baptist Christians, most

[76] 'Sixty-Fifth Annual Report: American Baptist Missionary Union', *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (July 1879), 59: 240.
[77] Clough, *Social Christianity*, 224.

of whom were Madigas, had already come to 153,450 baptized believers.[78] In the long run, much of the entire community of nearly a million were mobilized and formed a new identity as Christians.

After the famine, petitions for baptism filled out by preachers acquired a typical format: '[____, Ayyahgaru], has preached in our village for several years; but we did not believe what he said. Then the famine came, and many from our village worked on the canal. By this aid, and loving words . . . urging us to work and not be discouraged, or not to give up hope, we are now alive. We have learned about Jesus Christ. We now believe in him as the only God and Saviour. We are very poor. Our huts are fallen down, and we have not much to eat but leaves; but we do not ask for money. We will not ask for a pie [a tiny copper coin], even though we starve to death; but we believe in Jesus, and, as he commanded us, we want to be baptized. We can die, if it be God's will; but we want to be baptized first. Be pleased to grant our request, and do not put us off any longer. May the Lord help us all!!'[79]

By 1982, except for the north-east where there were 1.2 million Baptists, in no other part of India were there to be so many Baptists as in the Telugu districts (of what is now Andhra Pradesh). But, while these numbered at least 600,000, this figure was and is misleading. Since only baptized believers were counted as church members, the actual count within Telugu Baptist congregations was at least twice if not three times higher than formal church membership might suggest. Thus, with a Baptist population of well over 2.5 million by 1982, India 'had become one of the major Baptist countries of the world'.[80]

Shortly after the Madiga Christian movement gained momentum, the Mala Christian movement began. Malas, also an *āvarna* people located at the very bottom of the social hierarchy, below and outside the proper 'caste system' (*varnāshramadharma*), saw themselves as superior to the Madigas. As antagonists competing against Madigas in all things, they could not allow themselves to be bypassed or outdone; and, as a consequence, they also turned Christian in large numbers. To assist them in this process, they also turned to the American Evangelical Lutherans of the Guntur Mission. This, after its founding in 1842 under 'Father' Christian Frederick Heyer, had soon also spread itself from Renigunta and Salem to Rajahmundry. Two years after the Great Famine of 1877–8, 1,700 Malas were baptized, most of whom remained steadfast in their new faith. As in the case of other such movements, whole families and whole village ghettos (*cheris*) converted

[78] Julius Richter, *A History of Christianity in India* (Edinburgh, 1908), 233; Eighty-Sixth Annual Report, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, op. cit. (1900), 70, which gives only 130,000.

[79] Clough, *Social Christianity*, 238.

[80] R. E. Hedlund, 'Baptists of India', in *Dictionary of South Asian Christianity* (New Delhi: ISPCK, forthcoming).

together. By so doing, and forming a common front, it was easier for them to face opposition and persecution, forsake their old religious traditions, and refuse to participate in festivals and rites, as also to comfort each other and encourage each other in upholding the new standards of behaviour that their new faith required. More than that, the congregations that emerged came with their old leaders and their governing structures intact, thereby maintaining their internal discipline without abandoning many of their cultural treasures, social patterns, and reinforcing customs. Finally, as had been the case in other previous movements, each new mass movement later attracted peoples from one or more upper castes—peoples from ruling castes, such as Kammas or Reddis, whom Brahmans disparagingly called 'Shudras'. This helped to prevent Lutheran Christianity from becoming nothing more than a Mala religion, and Telugu Baptist Christianity from being an exclusively Madiga religion.[81] Within forty years, congregations in over 1,200 villages had 900 basic schools, with 1,300 teachers and 28,000 students, together with high schools and a college for training for Mala leadership. Numbers of Mala Christians, in aggregate, would soon equal if not surpass numbers of Madiga Christians.

What happened with Baptists and Lutherans was replicated in all other Telugu districts, including Telugu districts within the Nizam's dominions of Hyderabad, such as Karimnagar, Medak, Mahabubnagar, and Nalagonda. Simultaneous movements among other communities who were also awakened were provided with infrastructural institutional supports. Foremost among such missions were the Anglican (CMS and SPG), Canadian Baptist, Plymouth Brethren, Mennonite Brethren, and many other missionary agencies which, coming from overseas, eventually established institutional infrastructures among almost all Telugu peoples. Catholics, such as Jesuits, Missions Étrangères, and the Mill Hill Fathers, also continued to see steady, if less spectacular, expansion among upper-caste communities, especially among Kammas and Brahmans.

Perhaps the single greatest of all the local mass movements to occur in Telugu country occurred during the early decades of the twentieth century in Dornakal. This too had its origins in Tirunelveli where, on 12 July 1903, local Christians decided to form their own missionary society. The purpose of the Indian Missionary Society was to awaken all Indian Christians to their biblical responsibility for the evangelization of yet unreached peoples in India. One place where they decided to support missionaries was Dornakal. Dornakal, in the upper reaches of the Godavari where it reaches mountainous forests, was located near the Khammamett district, and within the

[81] *A History of Lutheranism in the Andhra Desa (The Telugu Territory of India), 1842–1920* (New York: Board of Foreign Missions, ULCA, 1959), 296–312.

Warangal district of the Nizam's dominions, where Anglican (CMS and SPG) mission, were already located. In 1909, Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, a Nadar Christian from Megnanapuram in Tirunelveli, gave up a position of leadership within the YMCA and offered himself for missionary work in the jungles of Dornakal. Since there were already thriving CMS-and SPG-supported congregations surrounding Dornakal, when Azariah was elevated to become India's first Indo-Anglican Bishop, Dornakal suggested itself to him as the natural seat for the new diocese. An ardent nationalist, ready to see the end of British rule, he epitomized the spirit of conversion movements then taking place in many parts of the continent.

What began in a tent and then a two-room cottage, where Bishop and Mrs Azariah brought up their little family, grew rapidly until, by 1947, there were over 250,000 Christians within the diocese, many of them, both Malas and Madigas, having been brought to faith by the IMS (Indian Missionary Society). The cornerstone for the cathedral at Dornakal, laid on 14 January 1913, began a slow process of building that would not be completed until 5 January 1949. The fact that the diocese lay within the domains of an Indo-Islamic princely state, combined with the Tamil origins of those who were bringing the Gospel to the region, suggested a syncretistic architecture—Dravidian pillars and Saracenic domes, with other kinds of indigenous embellishment. The overall advancement of Telugu Christians from oppression was perhaps not as rapid as that of the Christians of Tirunelveli. Yet, in overall accounting, Telugu Christians became almost as numerous, if never as adventurous or influential, as their Tamil cousins.[82]

Mass Movements in North India

Meanwhile, from the late 1830s onwards to the end of the nineteenth century, parallel but less dramatic developments occurred in virtually every other province, both within British India itself, which covered two-thirds of the continent, and also within many territories ruled by Indian princes. Wherever there were military cantonments, there were also small Tamil congregations, especially in Mysore but also in the north. But such mass movements as did occur seem to have been less sweeping, and met with more determined and organized resistance from Brahman-led revivalists or from other already revitalized non-Brahman religious movements that stretched from Mysore up through western Indian states and

[82] G. A. Oddie, 'Christian Conversion among Non-Brahmans in Andhra Pradesh, with Special Reference to Anglican Missions and the Dornakal Diocese, *c.*1900–1936', in *Religion in South Asia: Religious Conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977), 66–99.

beyond the jungled badlands of Central India, the entire length of the Indo-Gangetic plains and Assam Valley, from Guahati to Peshawar.

Even so, *āvarna* caste movements occurred in almost every region. Among Marathi-speaking peoples, where 14 per cent of the population was *āvarna*, of whom a full 11 per cent were Mahars, Mongs, and Chambars, there were conversion movements.[83] Jyotirao Phule, in launching an attack against the entire caste system, drew his inspiration from Christian teachings. Among Hindi speakers within the United Provinces of Agra and Avadh (aka Oudh), now known as Uttar Pradesh, Chamar and Bhangi peoples responded to the Gospel in substantial numbers. In the Punjab also, where sounds of clashing religious communities grew increasingly more strident, it was the Chuhras who began to turn, en masse, toward the new faith.[84]

Between 1881 and 1891, when censuses were taken, American Presbyterian missionaries saw the numbers of baptized Chuhra Christians for whom they provided various forms of institutional support jump from 660 to 10,165 persons. Another spurt occurred in the decade before 1914, when active membership in congregations (as distinct from baptized persons) jumped from about 7,000 to 32,000. If one considers that the total growth in numbers of Protestant Christians in the Punjab went from 3,823 in 1881 to 493,081 in 1947, such spectacular expansion was due almost entirely to such mass movements among Chuhras that, in the end, hardly any members of that people remained who had not turned Christian, except small remnants who turned to Islam or the Arya Samaj. The Chuhra movement was, in the view of Duncan B. Forrester, 'a kind of communal declaration of independence on such a large scale, especially between 1880 and 1920, that missionaries were incapable of giving much oversight'.[85]

Conclusion

Christian faith, to repeat pivotal words from page 142, Lamin Sanneh has reminded us, transcends 'ethnic, national, and cultural barriers' and moves beyond 'patterns developed in Europe'. Christian faith has never been bound by or restricted to any one culture. It has been bound by no single sacred language-in-text, such as Arabic has been within Islam; nor any one sacred

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[83] M. D. David, 'The Missions and the Beginning of the Dalit Movement in Western India', *Indian Church History Review*, 38: 2 (Dec. 2004), 112–24. Also see his *Missions: Cross-Cultural Encounter and Change in Western India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 295–327.

[84] John C. B. Webster, *A History of the Dalit Christians of India* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992); also *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1976).

[85] 'The Depressed Classes and Conversion to Christianity', in *Religion in South Asia*, 57.

blood or earth, or language-in-genome, as has been Aryan and Brahmanical or *Sanskriti* and Vedic lore as embodied in ideologies of 'Hindutva'. No one single human culture has ever been, in and of itself, sacred. Yet, all cultures have been capable of becoming sacred, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on how much their essentials could be transformed so as to reflect everlasting verities that are truly sacred. What happened among *āvarna* and also among *adivāsi* communities, as we shall see, may be understood as having manifested manifold instances of the '*indigenous discovery of Christianity*' rather than instances in the '*[Western] Christian discovery of indigenous societies*'.[86]

What this chapter has sought to demonstrate is a way of understanding movements of conversion among peoples whose despair, leaving them nowhere else to turn, responded to the Christian Gospel. The purpose has been to discover how some communities became so much more open to the Gospel and more susceptible to conversion than others. Ways to explain mass movements have also been suggested. Missionaries from abroad may have brought an initial stimulus, together with new technologies for transmitting both Scripture and science. But only after local agents with whom missionaries collaborated had taken full ownership of the Christian message, and the means for transmitting that message, was it possible for a new movement of conversion to take root and grow. Only by means of agents through whose efforts that message could be translated into locally understandable idioms that were acceptable and attractive, and only after a period of incubation within a potentially new host culture and community, did such movements explode. Only after the early converts had absorbed and acculturated the Gospel message, together with new and modern technologies that helped them to transmit their new world view, was there a release of spiritual energy that turned and then transformed whole communities. Interestingly, in India this kind of wholesale transformation came mainly to *āvarna* and *adivāsi* peoples. It was they who, in their many distinct ethnic communities, were like tinder awaiting a spark to set them aflame.[87]

Another approach to the question of why some marginal, outcaste, and oppressed peoples, whether 'untouchable' communities or tribal communities beyond the pale, were receptive to the Christian faith, while others

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[86] Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–22, 73–4. This is a motif or theme that is repeated several times within this work.

[87] One question not addressed here pertains to why some *āvarna* and some *adivāsi* communities did *not* respond to the Gospel of Christ. This is a complex issue, one that is not easily resolved. Thus, while some Malas and Madigas, for example, seemed to compete against each other in flocking to the new faith, others did not; moreover, in the Punjab, Chuhras seem to have responded more readily, and in greater numbers, than the Chamars; while in Maharashtra, many Mahars would eventually follow B. D. Ambedkar into a neo-Buddhist movement. The entire question, while it may be subjected to sociological analysis, seems too sticky for definitive answers.

were not, can be suggested. While definitive answers to such a question may be very difficult, if not impossible, to acquire in any definitive way, this approach to investigation can be put forward as a central theme within this entire study. Clues are to be found in the specific nature of one particular kind of primal religion rather than another. (A discussion of primal religion as a category of phenomena, as a possible answer to this question, is explored at greater length in the Introduction, as well as being touched upon in the Conclusion to Chapter 14.)

9

MISSIONARIES, COLONIALISM, AND ECCLESIASTICAL DOMINION

Christians in India, over the centuries from 1599 onwards, were continually conflicted and confused by various patterns of political behaviour that were initiated by European (*Pfarangi*) Christians. European Christians held positions of authority which connected them to aspirations and pretensions of the countries in Europe from which they had come. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, this adherence to and extension of ecclesiastical structures would be called 'denominationalism'. But, by whatever label or symbolic device it might be described, this kind of development in India was almost entirely and invariably about building an ecclesiastical dominion—about the 'kingdom of God on earth'. When implicated in attempts to control or to dominate Christians who were native to this or that part of the Indian continent, this kind of activity became a manifestation of 'colonialism'—at least in the sense that paternalistic behaviour exposed India's Christians to subjugation and exploitation.

Interestingly, outside of the confines of Goa and within the context of the rest of India in modern times, such behaviour does not seem to have characterized Roman Catholic institutions quite as much as non-Catholic institutions. Rather, for the most part, it can be applied more aptly to attitudes and actions of those Anglican clergy and missionaries who came out to India, not simply to spread the Gospel to people 'dwelling in darkness', but with specific designs of expanding the domains of the Church of England. Among such missionaries in India, those under the more 'High Church' Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (or SPG) and particularly those who came out to occupy episcopal positions as bishops or metropolitans were more apt to hold such aspirations. The Catholics, on the other hand, were never again in a position to enforce such complete authority or dominion over those Christians and missionaries, even Jesuits, who lived and worked out beyond the borders of Catholic rulers in Goa or other coastal enclaves.

Yet, if this were not enough, European Christian attempts to control and exercise dominion over Indian Christians increased during the nineteenth

century and onwards, especially as this was applied in relation to manifest-ations of caste consciousness and caste–related customs. This also happened to occur at the very time when Christians of India were facing mounting challenges and resistances from Brahman-dominated, 'twice-born' or 'Hindu', elites within each region of the continent in which such elites had long been dominant. How this played out in specific contexts, and various ironies pertaining to specific episodes, can be seen exemplified in what occurred in Travancore, Tirunelveli, and Thanjavur.

Travancore: Anglican Attempts to Dominate Thomas Christians

In November 1806, Mar Dionysius I, *Metran* of the *Jacoba* (Syrian) branch of Thomas Christians of Malabar, received Claudius Buchanan at his palace in Kandanāt. He was then a very old man, with a long white beard. Seated among his *kattanars* (pastors, or priests), holding a silver crozier that was curved at the top in the Greek style in his right hand and wearing a pontifical cope, with a round mitre on his head, he claimed to be the direct and legitimate lineal successor of the Apostle Thomas. As such, he represented a proud and ancient people. The Scottish-born Provost of Fort William College, holding credentials from the Governor-General, Lord Richard Wellesley, represented both the rising and spreading authority of the Indian Empire, and the awakening aspirations of what he hoped would be an emerging Anglican establishment in India. He had been sent from Calcutta to offer an alliance. Through local intelligence reports, he already knew about the ravages that Tipu Sultan had wreaked, and that the Malankara Church, and all Thomas Christians, were in serious trouble. Only a few copies of Syriac Scripture remained, and his *kattanars* were ill trained and poor. Bucha-nan promised the *Metran* printed copies of both Syriac Scripture and Malay-alam translations of Scriptures as soon as possible, so that copies of Holy Writ could be made available for all members of the community to read in their own mother tongue. Moreover, he pledged his word that a seminary would be built on behalf of the Thomas Christians so that many more pastors (*kattanars*) could gain literacy and training. Well understanding the sig-nificance of obtaining Company protection and well pleased with what he heard, and wanting to extend a token of friendship between Thomas Chris-tians and the Raj, the *Metran* presented Buchanan with an ancient and rare copy of the Syriac Scriptures that he said was more than 1,000 years old. When the British envoy then brought up the possibility of establishing a full union between the Anglican and Syrian Churches, the *Metran* remained discreetly silent and seemed to show less enthusiasm. Soon after Buchanan's departure and his return to Britain where he described India's Thomas Christians in his *Asiatic Researches*, the old prelate died. In his place, following

the ancient customs of lineal succession, by which a nephew took his place, the next *Metran* took the title Mathan Mar Thoma VII.

The Christians of Malabar whom Buchanan had met were 'Hindu'. They were so in the sense of being fully indigenous or fully 'Native'—Hindu in culture, Christian in faith, and Syrian in polity, rituals, and doctrines. Their proud tradition, that they traced themselves back to the Apostle Thomas and his arrival at the offshore island of Malankara in AD 52, held canonical status. Their proud history, including multiple arrivals over many centuries of refugees from Zoroastrian and Islamic lands, was often recited and sung. Their ritual purity and rank within caste structures (*varnāshramadharma*) was beyond dispute. Their aristocratic and landed merchant warriors—such as Malankara Nazarani Māppilas—entitled them to wear tonsures like the Nayars and Brahmans, in proximity to whom they occupied *tharavād* houses, strictly avoiding pollution of interdining or intermarriage and carefully disposing of their dead, tying *thālis* on the necks of their brides, and taking special 'marriage cloths'. Their *kattanars* and *metrans* were hereditary, with nephews succeeding uncles. Their lineages (*vamshvālis*), claiming direct descent from Brahman converts of the Apostle, could be recited from memory for as many as seventy or more generations. Patriarchs (Catholicos) of 'Antioch' and 'Babylon' who claimed sway over Christians had been challenged by Roman Catholic prelates of the *Padroado* in Goa. Yet Thomas Christians themselves cared little about doctrinal disputes, whether Diophysite ('Nestorian') or Monophysite ('Jacoba'). Like other elite communities defensive and self-insulating for the sake of survival, the vitality of their Christianity appeared to have sunk into a long hibernation. For a thousand years, the community's culture had been all but hermetically sealed against invasive forces.

The response to the arrival of the Portuguese, initially welcomed as allies against predators, had turned to resentment when the *Estado da India* imposed a Catholic hegemony. The split at the Synod of Udayamperur (Diamper) in 1599, when the Archbishop of Goa (Menezes) had cast aside Syrian institutions and burned Syrian libraries, had never been forgotten. Resistance to Catholic domination, running deeply beneath the surface, had erupted in 1653, as a solemn assembly of *kattanars* met at Koonen Cross (*Koonen Kurisu*). Then, for the first time, Thomas Christians had consecrated one of their own as *Metran*. The Dutch conquest of Cochin had favourably transformed their situation. Shortly afterward, a *Jacoba metran* (metropolitan) had come from the Catholicos of Antioch (then in Debhikr) to claim an autonomous or 'autocephalous' authority over all Thomas Christians. Ecclesiastical struggles—between Antioch and Babylon (between Orthodox West Syrians and Roman Catholic and Nestorian branches of East Syrian episcopacy)—had become endemic ever after.

This was the situation when the first permanent British Political Residents came to represent the East India Company's interests in Travancore and Cochin. Both Colin Macaulay (1800–10) and Sir John Munro (1811–19) happened also, by strange coincidence, to be Evangelicals. But initially, the presence of such agents of imperial authority had bred deep resentment, especially among Brahman advisers who all but held the Maharaja captive. Only after an attempt on Macaulay's life and a full rebellion against British presence had Company troops been sent in force to suppress the insurgents and 'rescue' Maharaja Raja Rama Varma. This happened in 1809. In 1811, after Munro was rewarded by being made *Diwan* or Chief Minister, circumstances for Christians and missionaries began to improve. Even after the Maharaja died in 1814, British influence increased. First Lakshmi Rani (d. 1814) and then Parvati Rani (1814–), who were installed as regents on behalf of infant successors, confirmed Munro's position as virtual ruler of the kingdom. As such, he showed a partiality toward Christians that was out of character for a Company servant and would have brought reprimands elsewhere in India. Thomas Christians were not only freed from compulsory (corvée) service and oppressive taxes to temples, but were also elevated to important judgeships—a partiality that aroused the resentment of non-Christian elites of Trivandrum (Tiruvanthapuram). Even more blatant was the open circulation of Malayalam translations of Syriac Scriptures which had been printed and placed in each church. On special lands paid for with endowments made by the Rani, a training seminary for Syrian priests was established in Kottayam. By 1816, when local pastors (*kattanars*) and teachers (*malpāns*) began to receive special training both in Malayalam and Syriac languages, twenty-five students enrolled. The *Metran* himself was in residence at the seminary, and CMS missionaries—Thomas Norton, Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn, and Henry Baker—were brought in to teach at the seminary at Kottayam and to preach at Thomas Christian churches in the countryside.

But this situation did not last. Mar Dionysius II died in 1816. Thereafter confusion increased, especially when Munro tried to influence the succession. His nominee resigned shortly after being made *Metran*. Punnathra George Kattanar, who was then consecrated as *Metran* Mar Dionysius III, convened the Synod of Māvēlikkara in 1818. With missionaries sitting on his right and left hand, the assembled *kattanars* listened as they were told that henceforth all ceremonies, doctrines, and rites would be made to conform with the Scriptures as interpreted by missionaries. On the hearing of this admonition, Konāṭṭu, one of the leading *malpāns* (instructors or professors) in the seminary, warned that if changes were allowed to develop too rapidly there would be trouble within the congregations. By then, due to missionary pressures, clergy were being made to marry, images and icons in the

sanctuaries were being removed, new schools were being opened through-
out the countryside, the reading of Scripture in Malayalam was becoming
mandatory at Sunday's worship, along with administering of the Holy
Eucharist.

No sooner had Munro retired in 1820, however, than the situation for
Christians began to deteriorate—first between Brahmans and Christians,
and then between Anglican missionaries and Syrian prelates. Hindu resent-
ments were directed against both Thomas Christians and missionaries. After
the death of Mar Dionysius III in 1825, a synod of clergy and laity elected
Philipose *Malpān* as their *Metran*, under the title of Mar Dionysius IV.
Relations deteriorated sharply as Christians lost government positions and
the new British Resident was less than sympathetic to their plight. Agents
arrived from the Patriarchs of both West and East Syria (Mesopotamia). The
old quarrels were revived—between Malankara and Antioch, between
Indian and Syrian, and between opposed communities of Thomas Chris-
tians, with each party claiming both apostolic legitimacy and patriarchal
support whenever such claims seemed suitable.[1] Resentments against mis-
sionary intrusions into these quarrels and against attempts to impose con-
formity to biblical norms rapidly increased. Bishop Reginald Heber, while
in Thanjavur on his last journey and shortly before his tragic death by
drowning in Tiruchirapalli, received an envoy from the *Metran* and tried
to pour oil on the waters. But when Bishop Daniel Wilson came to
Travancore and took a much harder, more principled, and less tolerant
line, insisting that Thomas Christians submit to Anglican doctrines and
norms, Thomas Christians were outraged. Memories of their long struggles
against papal supremacy, and especially of the humiliations of the Synod of
Udayamperur in 1599, had never been forgotten. They were not about to
let such a thing happen again. It was much easier for local clergy, both
bishops and pastors (*metrans* and *kattanars*), to manipulate the relatively
powerless and remote patriarchs of Syria. Thus, when they assembled at
Māvēlikkara in 1836, they firmly rejected Wilson's views and reaffirmed the
apostolic authority of their own ancient tradition. Their action at this synod
ended any formal connections between Thomas Christians and Anglicans.
Struggles over the Kottayam property that soon erupted and became on-
going served only to make the rupture all the more permanent.

As a result, after two to three decades of Anglo-Syrian collaboration,
two reform-minded groups of Evangelical Thomas Christians emerged
and broke from the old High *Metran*'s ecclesiastical authority. The smaller,
more dissident part of Thomas Christians became Anglican. The larger of

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[1] This quarrel was to remain so bitter that it still survives, with some court cases being two
centuries old.

these two groups, while it remained staunchly committed to the ancient Thomas Christian traditions, still strongly felt the need for internal reforms, both in doctrinal and structural terms, as well as in a need for entering more fully into the modern world. Their leader was Abraham Malpān. Although he had greatly appreciated many of the lessons he had learned from Anglican missionaries at Kottayam College, he resigned from the college in order to bring reforms and vitality to his own substantial following. From within his own large congregation at Marāmanu, which served well as a springboard for his ambitious campaign, worship services (*Qurbanas*) were held in Malayalam and non-biblical elements were removed from both faith and practice. Yet, not wanting his wide-ranging reforms to die out after his own death and also wanting to legitimize his position to that end, he formally laid hands upon his nephew, Matthew, and sent him as his emissary to the Patriarch of Antioch (then in Mardin) for consecration as the next *Metran*—doing this while the old *Metran*, Mar Dionysius IV, was still alive. The young *kattanar* who went to Mardin had studied both in Kottayam and Madras. He made such a good impression that the Patriarch almost immediately consecrated him, giving him the title of *Metran* Mar Matthew Athanasius. But as soon as Athanasius returned to India and arrived in Travancore his authority was challenged. Mar Dionysius accused him of being nothing more than a dupe and puppet of European (*Pfarangi*) missionaries and of subverting ancient traditions. At the same time, he also sent a messenger to the Patriarch. In response, the Patriarch sent Mar Kurilos to investigate and come to a decision about which was to remain as *Metran*. But Mar Kurilos had his own agenda. He had hardly arrived when he pronounced against both claimants and, in turn, soon declared himself as the one, only true and legitimate *Metran* of all Thomas Christians. At this point, upon appeal to the government of Travancore by the Thomas Christian adherents of Mar Abraham, the case went before Travancore High Court. There, in 1852, a decision was made declaring that the documents of Mar Matthew Athanasius were genuine, while documents being put forward by attorneys (*vakils*) on behalf of Mar Kurilos were declared to be forgeries.

As soon as this point of authentic succession had been decided, the vindicated young *Metran* struggled to heal his deeply divided community. A number of *kattanars* who had previously given homage to Mar Dionysius continued to question his credentials, feeling that the Patriarch had been duped. Even so, this new branch of the ancient community gradually strengthened itself, doing so by incorporating reformed doctrines within its ancient institutions. The efforts made by Mar Matthew Athanasius soon revealed that there was a strong feeling in favour of change. The fires of modernization and reformation had never been extinguished by the Synod

of Māvēlikkara in 1836,[2] despite deep antipathies to Anglican domination. As a consequence, new schools continued to multiply and literacy rapidly increased. In 1888, the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association was founded. Among its specific purposes was a commitment of outreach to lower-caste peoples. Local missionaries sent out to evangelize among lower-caste communities also established ashram-like settlements for new converts. Thus, while new converts, on the whole, never quite entered within the folds of older Thomas Christian congregations, but tended to remain within their own caste communities, some of them became associated with Thomas Christian leadership. Other converts sought to remain free from Thomas Christian domination. One of the capstones of the Mar Thoma Syrian Evangelistic Association, which ran some 180 missions and ashrams, was its Maraman Convention, an annual event that became famous for the enormous throngs it attracted. Thus, partly due to the earlier efforts of CMS (Anglican) missionaries during the years between 1806 and 1836, but also due to their own insistence on remaining free of colonial domination, reformed Thomas Christians steadily moved into the modern world.[3]

Tirunelveli: The 'Rhenius Affair' and Missionary Colonialism

Meanwhile, rapid expansions of the Evangelical congregations in Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, and Travancore, with special reference to mass movements of conversion, were in the midst of accelerating advances when they were suddenly stopped short by an event that occurred within their midst that they could hardly fathom. Karl Rhenius was abruptly dismissed, told to leave Tirunelveli, and the entire work he had built up taken over by two missionary officers of the Church Missionary Society. The reasons why this Evangelical branch of the Church of England in India took such a drastic action, while mainly ecclesiastical, were explained in doctrinal terms. The grounds for Anglican concern were not new. From an Anglican perspective, the free-wheeling German Lutheran with Moravian and 'dissenting' or 'nonconformist' inclinations and proclivities held doctrines

[2] A parallel saga of Byzantine complexity occurred between competing *metran*s of the (Nestorian) Patriarchate of Babylon (Chaldea), both in India and in Mesopotamia, as also between competing claims to that same Patriarchate, with two prelates claiming the title, one looking to Rome and submitting thereto while the other remained the autocephalous Catholicos of the Church of the East.

[3] Among communities claiming direct descent from the apostolic tradition of St Thomas: (1) the Orthodox (West Syrian) Church (Antioch, or *Jacoba*); (2) the Malankara Catholic Church & Malabar Catholic Church (Syrian rite and Latin rite branches); (3) the Independent Syrian Church of Malabar (Kunnamkulam); (4) the Church of the East (Babylonian, Chaldean, East Syrian); (5) the Mar Thoma Church; and (6) the St Thomas Evangelical Church (in two factions). 'Anglican' Thomas Christians are in the Church of South India.

and ecclesiological views that did not meet with approval of some within higher reaches of the Church of England. The roots of Anglican concern lay deeply buried in the ecumenical spirit of the original Hanoverian connection to the British throne. Originally amicable and collaborative relations between Anglicans and Lutherans that had subsisted since the founding of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and its sisterly relations with the Francke Stiftungen in Halle and the Royal Danish Mission in Copenhagen seem finally to have worn thin. Since 1726, first Schultz and then Schwartz had set precedents of early German Lutheran missionaries receiving support from the SPCK and also serving as chaplains and pastors among both European and Native Christians in India, regardless of whether those Christians were Anglican or Lutheran. But this kind of cordiality had not been without occasional misgivings and tensions on both sides. Reservations had been especially strong among High Church members of the Anglican establishment, which did not want to see Anglo-Catholic principles compromised. Long negotiations had occurred between London, Halle, and Copenhagen during the 1760s before Schwartz could be 'loaned' to the Anglicans and allowed to function as a chaplain/cleric among Anglican Christians in India. The views of Rhenius, a spirited Lutheran with Moravian Pietist influences that he picked up in Herrnhut and Berlin, had accorded even less with those of the Church of England. Discussions had occurred at the time of his original appointment, before his sailing for India on 4 February 1814. When Thomas Robinson, Archdeacon of Madras since the time of Bishop Heber,[4] had urged him to express his ideals in a critical review of a work he had written entitled *The Church: Her Daughters and Handmaidens, her Pastors and People, etc*,[5] Rhenius had obliged him. In this review, he had expressed reservations about Catholic or Episcopal views concerning 'apostolic succession'—namely, that true legitimacy for pastors and bishops descended, by consecration of the 'laying on of hands', back to one or more of the original Apostles, if not exclusively to the Apostle Peter. The contents of his review had been known to home officers of the CMS who, nevertheless, had continued to support his commission into missionary service that had been made more than twenty years earlier. But, for the sake of ecumenical harmony, the Rhenius review had never been

[4] Thomas Robinson, *The Last Days of Bishop Heber* (Madras, 1830), contains the ecclesiastical views of the Archdeacon, who was a member of the Madras Corresponding Committee of the CMS.

[5] Almost impossible to find, the only copy I know of (aside from my own copy) is in the British Museum. It was published in 'Tinnevelly', 1834; and in London, 1835; 62 pp.; J. Rhenius, *Memoir of the Rev. C. T. E. Rhenius, Comprising Extracts from his Journal and Correspondence* (London, 1841) (henceforth *MOR*), 501.

published; and the CMS had continued to encourage what he did under their auspices—especially when CMS recruitments of missionaries in England were not doing so well—in much the same spirit that had come with, and survived since, the Hanoverian succession.

But then, nearly twenty years later in 1832, Rhenius wrote to the Madras Corresponding Committee of the CMS that an urgent need for more trained and ordained catechists, pastors, and teachers had prompted him to provide special training for some of the most promising young men, seven of whom he had ordained. Until now, precedents going back to Thanjavur and Tranquebar had been followed, whereby the local missionary enjoyed considerable autonomy in such matters. But the CMS Committee was now of the opinion that, although many Indians might have previously received 'Lutheran orders', the time for a change had arrived. John Wilson, the new Bishop in Calcutta, indicated that loyalty to the Church of England required that workers under the CMS should henceforth be ordained, if at all, only according to the Church of England rites and not according to those of the Lutherans. Karl Rhenius and his colleague, Bernard Schmidt, replied that their newly trained workers, as catechists, pastors, and teachers, had conscientious objections to following this new instruction—especially since they did not believe in such rituals as 'signing of the cross' at baptisms or commissionings since only God alone 'absolved people from sin'.[6] At about the same time, Rhenius had apparently written to the new Bishop of Calcutta heartily welcoming him to India and extending to him an invitation to visit Palaiyamkottai as soon as possible, to see what blessings God was bringing to the peoples of Tirunelveli. His reports, having dwelt at length on the wonders of divine power being witnessed in mass conversions then taking place, stressed the need for pastors to watch over huge flocks of new Christians and the recent ordination of seven highly qualified, well-trained, and promising young men. The reply he received, indirectly, declared that his actions were invalid and reprimanded him for violating the hallowed doctrine of apostolic succession. Worse still, his honesty and integrity were openly brought into question by the Bishop. Deeply hurt that, instead of words of appreciation or commendation for nearly twenty years of uninterrupted missionary labour, he had received such harsh words, and having waited in vain for the Archdeacon to publish his long dormant review, Rhenius took a step that perhaps might have been better avoided: he published the review himself. The contents of this review, already long known to the CMS, were not news.[7]

[6] Paul Appasamy, *The Centenary History of the C.M.S. in Tinnevelly* (Palamcottah: Palamcottah Press, 1923), 58–62.

[7] *MOR*, 46–96, 497–533. Both in *MOR* and in *CMS* correspondence.

No mention was made of a second pamphlet that Rhenius had published at the very same time. Entitled 'Union of Christians, an Address to all Christians, especially to all Ministers of the Gospel', he had clearly and specifically attempted to bring about harmony among missionaries of different backgrounds, with the object of setting aside those doctrines or policies that were 'non-essential' so that nothing could impede the spread of the Gospel in India. Instead, publication of the first pamphlet provoked a drastic response. This took the form of a letter of dismissal that was personally delivered to Rhenius by two CMS officers, informing him that his connection with the CMS was at an end and that, since the 'territory' in which he had been working belonged to the CMS, he should forthwith depart from Tirunelveli.

Rhenius himself was utterly heartbroken. Confused and distraught, not knowing quite what to do next—not wanting to cause harm and wanting no earthly kingdom for himself or anything that might hinder the movement in any way—he abandoned everything and went to Madras, and then to Arcot. But no sooner had he gone to Arcot than he quickly realized that leaving Tirunelveli, so abruptly and without attempting to remain, had been a serious mistake. The schism the CMS action had provoked, both within congregations of the district as also across the whole continent, and in the world, was so deep that it would only continue to get deeper whether or not he was in Tirunelveli. Only then did he realize the second mistake he had made.[8] As the furore that his dismissal had stirred up kept mounting, with the controversy spreading across the Evangelical world, Rhenius decided to return to his own beloved people. There, in reduced and humble circumstances, both in Suveshipuram ('Town of Salvation') where a house was established in his honour, and in Tirunelveli itself where houses were made available to him, he tried to carry on his work. Money for his support came from all over India and from Europe, and it continued to increase.

About the circumstances of his original appointment, Karl Rhenius wrote at length:

When my fellow-labourer [Schnarre] and I were sent out to India, now twenty-one years ago, no question was ever put to us on the subject of conformity to the Church of England . . . nor have I received a single application from the Society to conform . . . I never concealed my sentiments and mode of proceeding . . . I never promised to submit to the English bishops, not even to observe the Church of England forms. No such promise was even asked of me . . . The Committee of the

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[8] *MOR*, 501–3. *Farewell Letter of Mr. Rhenius to the Church Missionary Society, after Receiving his Dismissal* (London, 1836; also published in Madras and Palaiyamkottai).

Society, at that early period, did not even expect that German clergymen should conform to the Church of England.[9]

Almost a century later, Paul Appasamy would describe him as 'a great Tamil scholar, probably the best among the European missionaries then labouring in India', who wrote numerous tracts and textbooks as well as occasional pamphlets and serious treatises. His Tamil grammar was completed, and work on his new translation of the Bible continued.[10] But the heartbreak of what had happened and lingering sorrow over the schism, over what was happening among bewildered congregations in the villages, was more than he could stand. As his strength declined, he struggled on until his death, on 5 June 1838.

During his last years, news of what had been done to Rhenius had fallen upon Tirunelveli congregations like a bomb. News of his death brought further shock. Mounting lamentations came from near and far. While all joined in eulogies, paying tribute to the dedication, energy, faithfulness, and genius that his life had manifested, the action taken by the CMS, Bishop Wilson, and Archdeacon Robinson came under increasing fire. This was not easily deflected. No argument that such actions had been taken in the interests of the local Evangelical congregations was persuasive. What had been done was interpreted as a nice and easy, and virtually costless, way for the two Anglican missionary societies to reap what others had sown and to acquire an ecclesiastical dominion over Christian flocks that had been begotten and gathered by others. As the storm of protest broke over the CMS—and also over the SPG which in 1828 had sent Rosen to northern Tirunelveli to take ecclesiastical control over some older Lutheran congregations but had, by 1835, succeeded only in getting a toehold on the area—both societies were put on the defensive.[11]

As early as 1833, a leader among missionaries, Antony Norris Groves, had come to Tirunelveli. This 'Radical Evangelical', after severing his ties with the CMS and becoming one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren movement, had come to India as a missionary at the behest of General Sir Arthur Cotton. Mincing no words when he learned about the 'Rhenius Affair', his fiery pamphlet supporting Rhenius threw fat on the fire and provoked a 'pamphlet war'. J. S. Strahan's response, *Mr. Groves' Brief Account of the Tinnevelly Mission Examined, in a Letter to a Provincial Member*

[9] Extract of letter to Revd Dr Stevenson of Bombay ('Palamcotta, May 5, 1855'), in *MOR*, 499–500. Ch. XVII, pp. 497–533, contains a shrewd and balanced analysis and summary of the entire episode. Written by his son Josiah, this indicates that both sides made serious mistakes, but that the dismissal, without warning, was too extreme and very destructive.

[10] *MOR*, 495–6, 497–534, 590–619. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 63–9. C. T. E. Rhenius, *A Grammar of Tamil Language* (Madras, 1836, 1845), 70.

[11] *MOR*, 450–5.

of the Church Missionary Society (London, 1835), brought a rejoinder, to which he added an enlarged missive entitled *The Present State of the Tinnevelly Mission* (London, 1836). This, with its historical introduction, attacked the letter that Rhenius had sent the Church Missionary Society at the time of his termination. Meanwhile, John Tucker, the MCC Secretary, published his own *Review of the Tinnevelly Question, Prepared under the Authority of the Madras Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society* (Madras, 1836). At this point Rhenius, who had remained silent as waves of acrimony grew and as the press in India, Europe, and America commented on what was now seen as a scandal, felt compelled to publish his *Reply to the Statement of the Madras Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society Respecting the Tinnevelly Mission* (Madras, n.d. [1836?]). To this he appended a narrative summary of the repercussions suffered among his beloved *mufassal* congregations, giving a reasoned justification for his return to Tirunelveli in 1835 and his carrying on the work he had left. The pot was then kept boiling when George Pettitt, the missionary sent to take Rhenius' place in Tirunelveli, published his own defensive *Narrative of Affairs in the Tinnevelly Mission, Connected with the Return of the Rev. C. Rhenius* (Madras, 1836). John Tucker felt obliged to make a further defence of what the CMS had done and what was being done for the Christians in Tirunelveli.

What finally seems to have established Rhenius' place in history was his son's work in compiling and publishing the massive (627-page) *Memoir of the Rev. C. T. E. Rhenius, Comprising Extracts from his Journal and Correspondence, with Details of the Missionary Proceedings in South India* in 1841. This work documented in detail what had been happening in Tirunelveli for fifteen years prior to the heavy-handed intrusion of the Anglican establishment. Two further attempts to justify the CMS intrusion were contained in John Tucker's final, twenty-page *Report on the Tinnevelly Mission, Adverting to Differences of Opinion* in 1844 and George Pettitt's equally short, twenty-two-page *Account of the Palamcottah Mission Church*, in the same year. Both, ostensibly written 'for private circulation only', seem designed to mollify and to pour oil on troubled waters. Even so, heavy self-promoting polemics were to follow. Under the name of his sister Sarah, a two-volume work conveying Tucker's observations, entitled *South Indian Sketches* (1842), was published as letters 'to a young friend', namely to Sarah herself. This appeared in three editions by 1848 and was followed by George Pettitt's own massive *The Tinnevelly Mission of the Church Missionary Society* in 1851. These works came out in the same year as Tucker's autobiography. Considering that these were the very persons who had taken over what Rhenius and his 'Pilgrims' had accomplished in the first place and who had later tried to pick up the pieces, the self-justifying rationalizations that came out between 1836 and 1851 speak for themselves. Yet, at the same time,

these writings all seem to have betrayed an understandable uneasiness of conscience.

Meanwhile, after the death of Rhenius, English officers of the CMS went to some lengths to pacify the considerable body of young German missionaries who had been attracted to Tirunelveli by Rhenius, and who had gone with him north to Arcot and then returned. Attempts to mend what had been broken included a pension provided for the Ceylon-born widow of Rhenius (the former Miss Van Someren, daughter of a Dutch burgher family whom he had married in Madras) and funds for the education of each of the nine Rhenius children. Josiah Rhenius went to CMS missionary training school in Islington. It was his publication of the *Memoir of the Rev. C. T. E. Rhenius* in 1841 that served to reveal, once and for all, the full stature of Rhenius. One daughter, Katherine, married Joseph Müller, a German missionary who remained with Rhenius and continued to work in Suveshipuram and Nagarkoil, first under the LMS but then under the CMS, until his untimely death in 1843. After Müller's death, she married Benjamin Rice, LMS missionary in Bangalore. Two other daughters, Lydia Caroline and Sophia Harriette, also married missionaries in India. Of the other German missionaries who worked with Rhenius, Bernard Schmidt, J. C. F. Winkler (in Dohnavur), and J. M. Lechler abandoned Tirunelveli and never returned. Only Paul Pacificque Schaffter remained. He returned to Nullur and continued to work for another thirty years.

The fact remained, when all was said and done, that a deep schism—or, rather, schisms—resulted from the CMS action. These could never be entirely mended nor controlled. A new and a more fissiparous or fractious spirit entered the conversion movements of South India. This fracturing was a direct result of the way in which, in the minds of many local people, Rhenius became a larger than life mythic figure—someone seen as a 'martyr' for the sake of Tirunelveli Christianity. Thus, despite all CMS attempts to heal these wounds, the ecclesiastical and political life of the Evangelical Christians of Tirunelveli became divided into at least three, if not four or more, communities. Ironically, the very heat and fire generated, drawing attention to how high ideals rather than monetary or temporal interests were at stake, seems to have attracted more enquirers, so that the conflict seems to have accelerated the number of conversions throughout the area. Moreover, whereas previously, on grounds of Tamil literacy, mainly Vellalars had been recruited and trained as pastors and teachers, the crisis prompted Rhenius to open more positions to newly trained Nadar disciples, especially after his return from Arcot at the end of 1835.

Some Tirunelveli Evangelicals, as partisans linked to German missionaries—e.g. Schmidt, Schaffter, Müller, and Lechler—became known in Tamil, along with their Tamil following, as the 'Westside People' or *Melpakkathar*.

This territory ran up toward slopes of the Western Ghats where Dohnavur was located (as well as the ancient pilgrim sites of Courtallam and Tenkasi, with their hill climate). Distinct from the CMS-led party that was known as the 'Eastside People', the *Melpakkathar* blamed Anglican machinations for Rhenius' death.[12] Other Tirunelveli Christians became linked to the SPG in the north; and still others, to the LMS in the south—in villages stretching from Nagarkoil to Kaniya Kumari and into south Travancore. These would be joined, a few years later, by missionaries from Leipzig who came to rescue what might have remained of the Old Lutheran (Royal Danish-Halle) Mission of Tranquebar. As if these complications were not enough, after Rhenius' death, a 'Hindu Christian' community—reacting against missionary colonialism—broke away from all European connections of any kind.[13] Finally, to top all, Jesuits returned to Tirunelveli, having been absent since their suppression in 1773. Arriving back just after the death of Rhenius, they also wooed Nadar Christians, explaining that the 'sheep stealing' that had occurred during their long absence required efforts of reclamation—trying to entice Christians into their fold by whatever means seemed handy. As a consequence of all this ecclesiastical competition and conflict over the much sought after Nadar Christians, local church leaders, schoolmasters, and pastors or catechists were constantly induced, sometimes on flimsy pretexts, to change sides. On a few occasions there was even some violence between Christians in Tirunelveli.

In the light of all these developments, surface explanations for what was done to Rhenius were never deemed sufficient or fully satisfactory to burgeoning Tamil Evangelical congregations. For ever after, Rhenius was seen as one of several early victims of ecclesiastical or missionary 'imperialism' (or 'colonialism'). In other words, more was going on under the surface than could be explained away simply as a matter of doctrinal differences. Such differences had not previously been allowed to disturb cordial Anglican–Lutheran, or Anglo-German, relations. These went back for well over a century, if not all the way back to the Hanoverian Succession. Rather, since the French Revolution and the end of the Napoleonic Wars, an entirely new and different spirit had begun to grow and increase, at least in Britain, if not in Germany. One aspect of this change was the rise of a new nationalist spirit in European countries. It was embarrassing for the CMS that, despite a rising Anglican manifestation of evangelical voluntarism, relatively few missionaries had been recruited in Great Britain. Anglican attitudes, especially High Church fervour of the

[12] *MOR*, 516 ff. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 50–78.
[13] *MOR*, 516 ff. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 50–78, gives an excellent review and analysis of these developments.

Oxford Movement, were resisted by Robert Caldwell, who commented: 'The Americans and the Germans are doing far more for India, proportionately to their interest in it, than is being done by English churchmen.'[14] Statistics produced in 1852 would bear this out, showing that nearly half of the 99 German missionaries in India were being supported on funds from England; that there were 67 American against only 138 Anglican missionaries; and that there were much larger numbers of English dissenters and nonconformists among missionaries in India and Ceylon. This paucity of English churchmen Caldwell and other Anglicans saw as a 'national disgrace'.[15] He lamented that 'the zeal of the Germans for the evangelisation of India puts us to still greater shame' and that 'the Germans know about the antiquities of India . . . better than we do'. Such words gave voice to a new spirit in relations between English and Germans, betraying a growing national rivalry, as manifested in cooling relations between Anglican and Lutheran Europeans in India.[16] This rising chauvinist spirit among missionaries, while its legacy would never be as strong as the older and much more deeply rooted indigenous Christian traditions which had been planted by Halle Pietists, would increasingly haunt, if not taint, conversion movements in different parts of India.

While much meddling by alien missionaries and 'foreign' rulers in the lives of Indian Christians took place, this was not the whole story. Explanations are not that simple. Heretofore, because perhaps too much emphasis has been placed upon the role of missionaries and rulers and perhaps too little attention has been given to the impact of conversion itself and of reactions to it (or to counter-conversion, for that matter), indigenous movements in opposition to each other have not received the fuller attention or understanding they deserve. The fact that more is known about missionary protests and government policy should not blind us to the possibility that much of what really happened still lies hidden from the gaze of historians. Social forces straining against each other in silence, due to our ignorance, were not less (nor more) implacable for that silence.

'Tanjore Christians', Anglican Missionaries, and Caste[17]

Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar's later years were disturbed when Anglican missionaries belonging to the SPG arrived in Thanjavur to take over

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[14] R. Caldwell, *Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions* (London, 1857), 21–2.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid. 22.
[17] Nicholas Dirks, 'The Invention of Caste', *Social Analysis*, 25: 1 (1989), 42–52; 'Castes of Mind', *Representations*, 37 (1992), 56–78; and 'The Conversion of Caste', in Peter Van der Veer (ed.), *Conversion of Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 115–37.

positions and properties left by the last of the German missionaries supported by the SPCK. Almost immediately, attacks were launched against customs and practices of Christians that were deemed to be linked to their persistent and steadfast adherence to caste, especially as these were deemed to arise out of 'heathen superstitions' related to notions of 'purity' and 'lineage'. In this connection, shortly before his death in 1827, Bishop Reginald Heber (1823–7) had defended segregated public worship from missionary attacks. He had argued that Indian Christians of different castes who sat separately were no worse than Christian masters of Christian slaves in America or Christian gentry and their Christian servants in Europe who sat and worshipped separately—with gentry and masters attending worship on Sunday mornings while their menials prepared Sunday dinner or their slaves and servants either worshipping on Sunday evenings or otherwise sitting in upstairs galleries during morning worship.[18]

But, in 1834 and 1835, hardly seven years after Heber's death, positions taken by all earlier German missionaries, including the renowned Schwartz, were reversed. Daniel Wilson, the Metropolitan Bishop of Calcutta (1832–58) who eventually succeeded Heber, initiated these changes. Yet, when an actual ban was pronounced against caste discrimination, and announced in Vepery, on 12 February 1834, and when Paraiyar Christians were ordered to sit on the grass mats normally used by Vellalars and also told to sit on the Vellalar side of the sanctuary, Vellalar Christians abandoned the building en masse. And when Paraiyar Christian children were ordered to enter the schoolhouse, Vellalar parents withdrew their children from the school. At the same time, when Vellalars refused the common cup and common bread of the Holy Eucharist,[19] 700 of them were excommunicated from the congregation.

The number of Vellalars excommunicated in Thanjavur—so that a dying youth was denied elements of the Eucharist—came to 3,000. Missionaries there actually asked the District Magistrate to flog 'Hindu Christians' who refused to abandon caste strictures. One person so beaten, Christians claimed, required 'the professional assistance of the Surgeon'.[20] Petitions against missionary intrusions into their private affairs by local Christians

[18] Reginald Heber, 21 Mar. 1826: MPC/P (Tamil Nadu Archives (TNA): 620. 1155–67), paras. 2–5. Robinson, *The Last Days of Bishop Heber* 321–5; Bishop Heber to the Revd. D. Scheivogel: Chillumbrum, 21 Mar. 1826.

[19] 'The Humble Petition of Native Tamil Protestants of Vepery Congregation', Madras Public Consultations/Proceedings (MPC/P) (TNA: 619. 830–41, No. 34 of 7 Mar. 1834).

[20] 'Petition of Devasagayam, Mission Doctor of Tanjore' (TNA: 633. 961–5: 5, 27 Feb. 1835; No. 27), and several other petitions. Resident of Tanjore (A. Douglas) to Chief Secretary, GOM (TNA: 622. 2146–55: 5 June, No. 12 of 24 June 1834), with 'Several Petitions from the Soodra Christians of Tanjore'.

enraged at such provocations eventually came before the Governor of Madras, Sir Frederick Adam, and also before the Governor-General-in-Council for India, Lord William Bentinck.[21] These petitions bitterly complained against humiliations, fines, imprisonments, and beatings. The impression made by Bishop Wilson's intrusions among older Christian congregations would be summarized ninety years later by Eyre Chatterton: 'Everywhere the English missionaries were most unpopular; hundreds of catechists [pastor/preacher/teachers who served local congregations] resigned; and the excitement was so great that it was even referred to the Governor-General [Lord William Bentinck], who seems to have questioned the Bishop's wisdom.'[22] Stigmatized Vellalar Christians, referred to disparagingly in missionary records as 'Tanjore Christians', found themselves marginalized and oppressed.[23]

Like many non-Christians surrounding them, such Christians who found themselves obliged either to collaborate or submit to domination became extremely resentful and never forgot what they had suffered. Caste was not just a simple matter of birth (*jāti*), or of blood or lineage (*vamsha*). Two Vellalar Christians of Thanjavur, one Catholic and another Evangelical Lutheran, explored tensions underlying their situation. How, they asked, could a compassionate, just, and rational God create and redeem a single, universal humanity which nevertheless consisted of so many broken and complex shards of castes, communities, and cultures? For both Muttusami Pillai and Vedanayakam Sastriar, being 'Christian' was not simply a matter of adherence to an abstraction. Each Christian belonged to a family and a community—to a concrete entity with locality and specificity, with face and name, with birth (*jāti*) and blood (*vamsha*: lineage), and with tongue and style and taste. Birth, caste, intelligence, language, pollution, social ranking, and status were anything but common. At the 'Lord's Table', different beings could only 'sit together separately'. They could not enjoy 'spiritual unity' except within contexts of concrete social diversity where different peoples lived differently and separately, enjoying different status, wealth, and wisdom, and different styles and tastes. Christians should be free to organize themselves according to their earth-bound resources and distinctions, whether of caste (India), or class (Europe). In his 'Dialogue on the Difference of Caste' (*Jātiyacaracampavinai*: 1829), Vedanayakam described

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[21] 'The humble address of Trichvay . . . to Sir Frederick Adam, K.C.B., Governor in Council at Madras' (Tanjore: 6 Feb. 1835; MPC/P: 633. 965–8: No. 28 of 27 Feb. 1835). 'Petitions from Mullathamby, Catechist, and three others; David Pillay, and Six others of Tanjore . . . to Governor in Council, Ft St George, 8th April 1834' (MPC/P: 620. 1155 ff. No. 6, 18 Apr. 1834).

[22] *History of the Church of England in India* (London: SPCK, 1924), 165.

[23] The very meaning of 'alien' or 'foreign' is problematic, as applied in India, especially in light of pollution taboos.

how, within St Peter's Church in Thanjavur, European Christians sat on benches, Vellalar Christians sat on fine grass mats, and Paraiyar Christians, low-caste, or non-caste people sat on stone floors or on dirt/earthen floors. At the same time, their women and children also sat apart—each group according to birth and status. Indeed, in St Peter's, the sanctuary built by Schwartz with funds provided by the Maharaja, different castes had always sat in quadrants of nave and transept and had done so for generations. No 'earthly' circumstances were ever immutable or irrevocable. Change was always possible; but, at best, this only, preferably, and usually came slowly, and painfully.[24] Earlier missionaries had realized that Tamil gentry lived more elevated lives than most of the *Pfarangi* (European) merchants and soldiers, whose crude debaucheries, drunkenness, and earthiness had blackened the name of Christ in India. But since radical ideas from America and Europe had altered aspirations of missionaries in India, they now sought to impose equality upon everyone, especially every Christian. They were trying to mix cream with milk. They were calling for all to worship together in the same seats, eat together from the same dish, drink together from the same cup, sing together the same songs, study together in the same schoolrooms, work together in the same fields, and wed together persons of different birth. Worst of all, some of these Europeans who were making such outrageous demands were demanding what they would never themselves do.

Thus, after a century of growth as Evangelical Christians, Tamil congregations found themselves being dominated by Anglican (CMS and SPG) missionaries. By fiat, some 20,000 mostly Pietist Tamils found themselves 'converted' overnight into Anglican Protestants—forced to read different translations, sing strange new songs, and recite from an unknown Book of Common Prayer. As early as 1824, Vedanayakam had complained about 'junior' missionaries trying to 'force all castes or nations of this country to be of one caste and to make them eat and drink together and to have those of higher and lower castes connected to each other in marriage'.[25] At the same time, relations between the Anglican establishment and the government were also turbulent. As, in 1818, Bishop Middleton had found out that the Company's officers in India were not about to tolerate all assertions of

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[24] D. Dennis Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India: Tamil Evangelical Christians. 1707–1835* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), ' "New Missionaries" and the Tanjore Congregation', 140–72; BL/OIOC, Manuscript OR 11,742, transliterated *Jati-tiruttalin Podium*, and 'Saditeratoo', by Vedenayaga Sastree, Evangelical Poet, Tanjore 1829 ['The Foolishness of Amending Caste'].

[25] BL/OIOC, MS OR 11,742, 129: 'Dialogue on the Difference of Caste' (*Jātiācārasambhāvanai*).

ecclesiastical authority in India, so Bishop Wilson's scoldings of the government for interfering 'in purely spiritual matters' were roundly rebuffed.[26]

When Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar, the most renowned leader of the Tamil Evangelical Christian community of Thanjavur, who had run the school system for many years and whose status as former poet laureate in the *durbar* had brought glory to the entire community, was summarily dismissed, the community was outraged. Petitions were sent to the government of Madras;[27] Vedanayakam, on behalf of Thanjavur Christians, accused missionaries of committing four cruelties:[28] (1) tampering with Tamil Scripture, replacing old versions with their own; (2) forcing integration of all Christians into one caste, and excommunicating from the Eucharist all who refused to comply; (3) prohibiting flowers for festive celebrations such as weddings and funerals; and (4) removing Tamil lyrics and Tamil music from worship services.

Matters were further aggravated when George Uglow Pope and other High Church (SPG) missionaries tried to 'reform' the schools that Schwartz had founded, where Vedanayakam Sastriar had taught for fifty years. For Pope, the term 'Tanjore Christian' became an epithet. His *The Lutheran Aggression: A Letter to the Tranquebar Missionaries, Regarding their Position, their Proceedings, and their Doctrine* (Madras: American Mission Press, 1853) railed against their 'failings', going so far as to ask government officials to flog 'Hindu Christians' for refusing to heed 'church' commands. His printed letter of 14 October 1853, as well as his actions, damaged relations for generations thereafter.

Colonial Domination and Dual Identity

The mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century was *the* century of 'foreign' missionaries. In India, passage of the Company's Charter Renewal Act of 1813 lifted the formal ban on the admission of missionaries into Company-ruled territories and on missionary activities within those territories. Yet decades would elapse before the inflow of missionaries would reach flood levels. But, even so, as we have already seen, missionaries were not so much the actual 'cutting edge' of Gospel expansion or of effectively or persuasively placing the option of conversion before various

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[26] Rt. Revd Lord Bishop of Calcutta to Governor in Council, Fort St George, 9 May (No. 3) 1834: (MPC/P: 621. 1471–6 in TNA). See analysis of Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V. A. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 'Church–State Conflict in Anglican India', 93–115.

[27] ' "Humble Addresses" from Soodra Christians, complaining of beatings, etc', 8, 18 Apr. 1834 (para. 5): MPC/P: 620. 1155; 5, 24 June 1834: MPC/P: (622. 2146–55).

[28] Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India*, 148–72.

separate communities within India so much as the heavy infrastructural weight behind that edge. One might even say that, throughout missionary history in India, no single mass movement was ever initiated by a foreign missionary. Such leadership, for the most part, was provided by indigenous individuals and groups. It was they who served as the primary vehicles for bringing the Christian message to members of their own castes or cultural (ethnic) communities; and this they did through the medium of their own 'mother tongues'. Thereafter, in each instance, a kind of chain reaction would occur, whereby responses to the Gospel message that resulted in massive and multiplying waves of conversion would then lead missionaries into playing a secondary, or even a tertiary role. Mainly, they were the providers of various kinds of important, sometimes even essential, infrastructural support. This kind of support led to the building of institutional establishments. These establishments, as they evolved and grew stronger and stronger, had a tendency to become increasingly 'colonial' in the classic (as well as current and Marxian) sense.

Of the many kinds of missionary establishments that came into being, the two most important and noteworthy were ecclesiastical and educational. By and large, as just indicated, neither category of institutions contributed directly to the expansion of Christianity or to any major conversion movements. Rather, they operated, both directly and indirectly, to achieve greater influence within their respective domains where Christian communities were already being formed. Control and dominion were the objects that these organizational structures inevitably acquired. Such establishments, by their very nature, became 'kingdoms on earth' rather than in heaven. Their very existence implied 'dominion', authority, and rule over territorial domains. Eventually also, domains would be glossed under a number of euphemisms, one of which was 'comity'.

'Comity' began to come about when agents of different missionary societies would find themselves bumping into each other or overlapping each other in interior (aka: *mufassal* or *mofussil*) villages, with the result that, in due time, there would be endless conflicts and confusions over 'jurisdictions'. Through processes of consultation and formal conferences, a series of gentlemen's agreements would be worked out—between missionaries, and between their mission societies. No longer would any missionary work in any territory where missionaries of another mission society were already established. The result of such agreements or 'treaties' would be a more orderly 'patchwork quilt' instead of a 'higgledy-piggledy' jumble of territorial jurisdictions. In theory, no sheep nor shepherd was supposed to stray from one fold to another; nor were 'sheep' to be surreptitiously 'stolen'.

In September 1855, the first 'General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries' would meet, and would be attended by fifty missionaries from

six societies, only three of whom were Indians. The first South India Missionary Conference would then be convened in Ootacamund in 1858. The Bangalore Conference of 1879 would bring together 118 mission workers, fourteen of them Indians, for the purpose of smoothing away conflicts and differences. The Madras meeting in 1902, called the Fourth Decennial Indian Missionary Conference, would be an even more elaborate and noteworthy event, carefully prepared and attended by a select group of 160 delegates, representing some twenty-six societies.[29] Over the years thereafter similar conferences would take place all over India. But, with the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 and the Tambaram World Missionary Conference in 1938, the era of such conferences in relation to ecclesiastical domains would come to an end and a new age would dawn.

Of course, there would be notable instances of societies which chose not to participate in conferences. Catholics, of course, would never come to an event not sanctioned by Rome (nor were they invited). But Lutherans also, and 'Free Church' (from 'dissenting' or 'nonconformist') movements, including the Plymouth Brethren and, decades later, the Salvation Army, would never agree to 'comity'. Nor would they allow such considerations to enter into their policies, so that, for one reason or another, they would always tend to be absent. What would cause the rise of all these agreements were discords that arose between many different missionary societies and, especially, the Anglican societies—namely the CMS and the SPG. The whole process of putting 'fences' around missionary domains, in other words, seems to have begun in the 1840s and 1850s, with secessions resulting from the notorious acrimonious 'schism' that followed the dismissal of Carl Theophilus Ewald Rhenius (aka: Karl Gottlieb Ewald Rhenius).

But, looked at from a different perspective, what was significant about all forms of Christianity that took root within the Indian subcontinent was not just their strong sense of identity, each founded in a distinct and separate sense of ethnicity as well as faith, but also of dual identity. All Christians, whether high caste or low caste or aboriginal/tribal (*varna*, *āvarna*, or *adivāsi*) in origin, tended never to shed their distinctive identities based on 'birth' or *jāt*. Nowhere was such identity clearer than in the legacy of ancient Thomas Christians. These were high-caste Christians, Malayalam-speaking communities of ancient lineage, densely concentrated in towns and villages along the Malabar coast from Kaniya Kumari to as far north as Mangalore and Bombay, who, despite being revitalized and reconverted, retained such pride in birth and lineage, such sensitivity to purity and pollution, that their place within *varnāshramadharma* remained extremely strong. But the same strong sense of

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[29] Stephen Neill, *History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), 140–2. The SPG and Lutheran-Missouri Synod did not attend the 1902 meeting.

ethnicity could also be said to be true for virtually all Christians in South Asia, wherever they might be found. On the whole, Christians in the continent, in what now constitute separate countries of South Asia, tended to be identified less by nationality than by caste or ethnic community. This meant that virtually all Christians tended to identify themselves as much by birth, caste, and community as by church, denomination, or theological outlook. For them, in other words, 'comity' was nonsense, representing agreements between 'alien' or 'foreign' missionaries.

This being said, there was also a sense in which Christianity never existed solely in the abstract—except as an ideal. If all Christians have always had a strong sense of ethnic identity, such consciousness was magnified in India. 'Christian' as adjective, David Jeffrey has informed us,[30] is a property of something else, a concept that implies 'diminishment'—or positional sub-ordination. Things that are 'Christian'—activities, entities, communities, missions, institutions, and individuals—are defined by their relationship to the person of Jesus Christ, to whom they are subject. From this perspective, therefore, there never was nor could be any such thing as a basic or 'generic' or even an 'Indian' Christian. Only earth-bound, 'hybrid', or 'hyphenated' Christians could ever be identified or located. Such Christians were always pinned to the earth by their local cultures and languages. Within the India of Empire, as in all of South Asia ever since, there would be no Christians who were not hybrid and hyphenated Christians—unable to escape the context-ual features of ethnic identities which were rooted, first and foremost, in birth, family, and lineage.

The Gospel message, in its humanizing universality, directly challenged fissiparous tendencies of all religious traditions, Christian and non-Christian alike. It uncovered basic contradictions between *varnāshramadharma*, as defined by genomes of birth, blood, and earth and as privileged by classical civilization (*Sanskriti*) and tradition (*sanātana-dharma*), and the Gospel mes-sage of a single *imago Dei* for a biologically and theologically affirmed single kind of nature for the whole of humankind. Since missionaries from abroad were alien and since no movement could ever occur that was not conveyed by a local agent in that local agent's own 'mother tongue', no local Christian community or congregation ever escaped encapsulation within its own ethnic, hyphenated, hybrid identity—the paradox of representing both parochial and universal claims. Each Christian community possessed its own hyphenized and hybridized character, its own 'dual identity' or 'dual citizenship', one on earth and subject to Caesar and the other in heaven subject to God.

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[30] David Jeffrey, *Newsletter of the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies* (Madison, Nov. 2000), article, 1–3.

Shadows resulting from anomalies of this duality never disappeared. An acute consciousness that ceaselessly lay beneath conflicts among Christians—Indian or Western, Catholic or Evangelical, Anglican or Nonconformist, Latin or Syrian rite, Mar Thoma or Nazrani, *Jacoba* or Nestorian, Brahman or Vallalar or Nadar, conservative or liberal—was 'caste', or communal ethnicity. The historical and theological dimensions of this problem would never disappear, and have remained down to this day. Unity and diversity, polarities and contradictions, in the acceptance of a common humanity without repudiation of the blood-lines of lineage persisted throughout the Empire—before, during, and after—and would continue to persist. All Christians in India have a double dependency, a dual identity, that would seem as indelible as genomes in the blood.

A second shadow hovering over Indians, Christian and non-Christian alike, was the very presence of 'foreign' missionaries. Missionaries, as aliens, were, by definition, change-agents and disturbers of the status quo. Clashes between alien and indigenous, between foreign and native, remained more than mere religious or theological abstractions. Clashes were also cultural and psychological, and political. Christians opposed by political regimes, both alien and native, found common ground and mutual support. But when alien Christians (missionaries) and alien rulers, both of the same nationality, found common ground, Indian Christians suffered colonial domination. Yet, the Gospel work of missionaries—as agents of Christ— rarely if ever benefited from colonialism, or from ecclesiastical imperialism of any kind. As numbers of agencies multiplied into hundreds of separate missionary societies, both Catholic or non-Catholic, British or non-British, pre-colonial, non-colonial, and anti-colonial missionaries, taken together, soon outnumbered British missionaries. Those relatively few British missionaries who strove to make the Anglican establishment another fiefdom of their own Christendom would continue, in purely missiological terms, to be among the less effective of all missionaries. British missionaries who were from nonconformist missionary societies, while they suffered from being part of the same 'alien' shadow of colonial rule (whose official minions often despised them), were also often exempted from being implicated within the 'colonial' project and its establishment. Among British missionaries who were anti-colonial, none were less acceptable or comfortable within the 'colonial' establishment than the Salvation Army. Catholic missionaries, being predominantly non-British (French, Italian, Irish, etc.), and non-Catholic (Evangelical or Protestant) missionaries who were non-British, whether from North America or Northern Europe, remained ambivalent. Ambivalence toward the Raj, therefore, existed among recruits from lower classes within both British and non-British societies, especially those outside the establishment, but with many contradictions. Missionaries from 'faith'

missions, coming mostly from outside traditional systems of ecclesiastical control (various kinds of Brethren, Pentecostals, etc.) could be ambivalent also, depending on nationality.

Conclusion

Thus, to sum up, at each and every stage of development in missionary expansions during the nineteenth century, whether imperial or national, from the time of Christian Friedrich Schwartz down to such missionaries as Allen Hume, Verrier Elwin, Charles F. Andrews, Edward Thompson, and Amy Carmichael, some of whom became friends of Gandhi, there were prominent anti-imperial, pro-nationalist missionaries, many of whom also remained isolated as marginalized mavericks. Quite obviously, therefore, all missionaries had to confront conflicts between universalistic ideals of their faith and more immediate political realities, whether these were imperial or national in character.

Quite obviously also, what has been examined here can never silence all questions about disruptions within India, especially among India's Christians, which often came from meddling by alien missionaries and from interference by 'colonial' exploiters and 'foreign' rulers. Heretofore, because perhaps too much emphasis has been placed upon the roles of missionaries and rulers and perhaps too little attention has been given to the indigenous agency, the impact of conversion itself and of reactions to conversion (or to counter-conversion), and indigenous movements in opposition to each other, has not received the fuller explication and exploration that such events deserved. The fact that more is known about missionary protests and about government policy thereon should not blind us to the possibility that all too much of what really happened lies hidden from the gaze of historians. Social forces straining against each other in silence, due to our ignorance, were no less (nor more) implacable for hitherto lying beyond that gaze.

Finally, one can gather from each episode that there were not only profound tensions within the imperial system, but also within any kind of effort to formally 'establish' any single ecclesiastical hegemony. For this reason, what later came to be known as 'secularism' in India, evolving policies of 'non-interference' and 'neutrality', would always be very different from 'secularism' in the West. In India, secularism in no way implied absence of religion, or policies separating state structures from religion. Rather, Indian secularism became a public policy of even-handed and balanced 'acceptance' of each elite ethnic or religious community on its own terms, within each of which the state played the role of a 'neutral' arbiter. Religion and state were not separated, certainly never entirely. For the Empire in India, therefore, sole ascendancy of the Anglican establishment could never

be possible. While nationalists, whether Hindu or Muslim, might not baulk at paying taxes to support the Ecclesiastical Department, especially since British rulers might be expected to provide some benefits for the exercise of their own religion, they would certainly baulk at excessive favouritism, especially if this resulted in any kind of discrimination against local Hindu or Muslim establishments.[31] The many-spoked Wheel of State, the imperial *Mahachakra*, could not remain unbalanced for long, nor be allowed to function with broken spokes. The anomalies of missions and empires, therefore, required that virtually all religions, certainly all major religious systems, be allowed 'free' rein, altogether disestablished and unfettered, as much as possible, from imperial control but also enjoying a measure of imperial support.

Photographs of the following later Protestant churches can be found in the plate section:
St Andrew's 'Kirk', Egmore, Chennai (1820). Plate 12.
Church in Whitefields, Bangalore (n.d.: 20th century). Plate 13.

[31] For an excellent study of such anomalies, with special reference to 'Hindu' establishments, see Chandra Y. Mudaliar, *The Secular State and Religious Institutions in India* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974); Franklin A. Presler, *Religion under Bureaucracy: Policy and Administration for Hindu Temples in South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1–35.

INDIAN CHRISTIANS AND 'HINDU RAJ'

One of the many anomalies of the Indian Empire was the fact that, in fundamental ways, it was a 'Hindu Raj'—even as it was ostensibly under British rule. 'Hindu' as a term originally meant anything native to India, whether people, language, custom, or religious tradition. Before the Raj came into being, the term was not common. Even when used, it could be as easily applied to those peoples and institutions whose religious faith was Christian or Muslim. But, in the substance of its structures, human re-sources, and processes, the Raj itself was 'Hindu'. Polite protocols about religious 'non-interference' and 'neutrality' could not disguise a cold and clear-eyed political logic. As indicated in Chapter 7, the imperial Leviathan built by the Company, while aiming to maximize profit and power, rested firmly upon Indian (or indigenous) foundations. The original 'city-states' at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, as seedlings of empire, gave deference to local deities and rajas, as mediated through local agents and brokers (*duba-shis*) who, as merchant bankers and merchant princes, served this purpose. Without the Company's armed forces, often as many as 300,000 sepoys, largely from high-caste families that ruled agrarian villages, and as many cadres of civil servants from high-caste elites, such as Brahman or Kayasthas, who controlled vital flows of information and revenue, no empire would have been possible. Nor, without local collaboration, could what is now called 'Hinduism' have come into being.

What is now called 'Hinduism' was a product of collaboration between notable Native or Indian ('Hindu') and European (*Farangi*, *Parangi*, or *Pfarangi*) scholarly and political figures in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[1] 'Hinduism' was neither a British, nor a 'colonial', nor even an 'Orientalist' construction in any dismissive sense;[2] nor was it a missionary

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[1] John Stratton Hawley, 'Naming Hinduism', *Wilson Quarterly*, 15: 3 (Summer 1991), 24 ff., 30–4.

[2] R. E. Frykenberg, review of Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), in *American Historical Review*, 97: 1 (Feb. 1992), 272–3. Also 'Conversion and Protest', Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), in *Books and Culture*, 6: 3 (May–June 2000).

invention. Rather it was the by-product of cultural explorations, and socio-political accommodations, before and during the early Raj. High-caste, mainly Brahman *pandits* played as decisive a part as anything done by scholars from the West. Long before the Company emerged from coastal enclaves to play a larger part on India's political stage, local scholars had already con-veyed deep insights to such missionaries as Roberto de Nobili (d. 1656), Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (d. 1719), Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi (d. 1747), and Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux (d. 1779), whose work was plagiarized by Abbé J. Antoine Dubois.[3] Their studies of 'Malabarian' cultures and 'Gen-too' (and/or 'Hindoo') deities could not have been made without the scholarship of many local *pandits*. Later, patronage to hundreds of dedicated *pandits* and *munshis*, by Warren Hastings during the 1770s, as well as by such scholarly figures as John Holwell, Nathaniel Halhed, Sir William Jones, Colin Mackenzie, and C. P. Brown, brought ancient lore to light that might have perished. Such collaboration would eventually culminate, after a century, in the prodigious compilations of Monier-Williams, and Max Müller's fifty-volume *Sacred Books of the East*.[4] William Ward's (d. 1823) three-volume *Hindooism* followed the logic, begun by Catholic scholars, of codifying an emerging single system of quasi-official orthodoxy. Mean-while, as this syncretistic and tolerant, pseudo-political ideology brought various religious systems of India together under the imperial umbrella of 'Hinduism', the Company's own governments, on advice from Brahman servants, took over management of all *pukka* religious endowments and temples (e.g. Bengal, 1810; Madras, 1817), thereby inadvertently putting every local 'Hindu'—i.e. 'Native'—religious institution under a single, overarching structure of guardianship. Thus, by fiat, was a vast array of 'Hindu' institutions that were welded together within the imperial apparatus gradually reified under the name of 'Hinduism'.

Christian Resistance to the Raj

That Christians could have little if any place within this growing 'Hindu' empire is hardly surprising. Since the motive for Company enterprise was profit for stockholders and since money-making relationships with local merchants and bankers hardly mixed with missionary purposes, the first Evangelical (Pietist) missionaries had been clapped into jail and, but for

[3] The Company seems to have been only too glad to pay Abbé Dubois, who remained in Mysore until after the fall of Napoleon, for his (plagiarized) manuscript on *Hindu Manners and Customs*, if only to reinforce its own position in ruling as a 'Hindu' Raj.

[4] As later re-edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (President of India), and republished (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), subsidized by the Government of India, as a foundational 'construction' of a 'syndicated' modern Hinduism.

their royal Danish patron, would have been deported. Missionaries faced similar hostility from the English. Ever cautious and pragmatic, English Company servants studiously avoided tampering with religious institutions. Their policies of 'non-interference' and 'religious neutrality' aimed to demonstrate to all in India that their Raj was neither 'Christian' nor in favour of missionaries. European Company servants even personally endowed 'Hindu' deities and temples. There were contradictions, such as using missionaries as chaplains ('padres') to serve Europeans who 'happened' to be on the ground. While William Carey, inspired by Schwartz, would write *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens* (1792), and stir up missionary voluntarism in Britain and America, he himself was forbidden entry into British Bengal and only allowed into Calcutta as Professor of Oriental Languages at Fort William College. Likewise, Catholic vicars apostolic were given subventions for priests to serve Irish contingents within the Company's army. When, from 1792 onwards, Claphamite pressure in Westminster forced the Company to hire Evangelicals as 'missionary chaplains' these had to be extremely circumspect. Not until 1813—due to a parliamentary alliance of voluntary (missionary) agencies with 'free-trade' interests—was the ban on entry of missionaries into British India partially lifted. Even so, it took a furious 'pamphlet war' before the 'Pious Clause' of 1792 was reinserted into the Charter Renewal Act of 1813.

Thereafter, any missionary or merchant denied entry into British India had to appeal directly to the Board of Control whose chairman could revoke actions of the Company. Missionaries who arrived in Company domains continued to face stiff resistance—occasionally for good cause. Authorities in India remained extremely nervous about anything that 'Hindu' supporters might see as threatening their hallowed institutions and stood ready to summarily expel any missionary, or discipline, and even dismiss, any overly zealous officer whose tactless actions provoked social unrest. To disparage any Hindu and Muslim practice as 'devilish' or 'heathen' could get one admonished or even deported. Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras (1820–7), removed a district (*mufassal*) officer who abused his official position by indulging in personal evangelism. Lord William Bentinck's Government of India decree, in 1827, abolishing female infanticide and widow burning (*sati*) aroused such a storm that 30,000 gentry (*bhadralok*) of Calcutta co-signed a 'Sacred Petition' about this violation of their 'religious freedoms'.[5]

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[5] While *thugi*, *chharakki*, and *meriah* were suppressed by the colonial government without loud protests, such was not the case with *sati*. The 'Sacred Petition', submitted to the lords of the Privy Council in Whitehall, on 7 July 1832 (Public Record Office, London: Vol. 312 (1832), fos. 404–19), contained the signatures of over 30,000 notables of Calcutta who strenuously protested against interference by government in their eternally hallowed and time-honoured tradition of burning their widows.

The admission of missionaries, especially Anglican missionaries, gradually brought to India an entirely more self-confident and even aggressive form of missionary activity. This was also reflected in the tone of increasing numbers of forthright complaints and petitions submitted by local Christians, perhaps with missionary coaching. These directly reflected the continually increasing if sporadic outbreaks of violence against them. On 18 March 1833, for example, some 500 'native Christian house-holders', of Tirunelveli accused the Honourable Company of 'deeds . . . being done in support of heathenism and injustice to the poor'. The Company 'like kings of old, was exempting temples from taxation, funding daily blood sacrifices, seasonal festivals, and reinstating devil worship'. Worse yet, only 'caste people' were being allowed to enter 'public' buildings to file complaints, while lowly people, including Christians, were not allowed to defile 'public' space in order even to obtain a simple hearing. Newly converted Christians were being threatened, beaten, and robbed of their means of tapping palmyra trees for livelihood. It was one thing when governments under 'heathen' kings perpetrated such discriminatory injustices against Christians, but it was quite another when Christian subjects of a government supposedly under 'Christian' rulers suffered such injustices, and when servants of that government strove to prevent the free exercise of Christian worship.[6] Indeed, how could this state of affairs be otherwise when, in a *taluk* that employed 1,881 officials, only two were Christians? At about the same time, on the other hand, non-Christian notables of 'Black Town' (George Town, Madras) wrote to the Governor expressing appreciation for protection from aggressive Christian violations of ancient religious customs and from attempts of missionaries, ever since 1817, to erect a church and school in close proximity to their temple: 'Therefore, we most humbly render our hearty thanks to your honour in Council, praying to God for your Welfare and also for the Honourable Company who are ever Benevolent . . . in distributing justice impartially. May the Goddess of Victory dwell on the edge of the Sword of their Warriors and let their Flag continue as long as the Sun and Moon shall endure . . . '[7]

On 11 October 1836, Daniel Corrie, the Bishop of Madras, sent a 'Memorial' to the Governor-in-Council of Fort St George on behalf of Christian servants of the Company, civil and military. This protested against

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[6] 'Humble Petition of Christian Inhabitants in the Zillah of Tinnevelly, to the Rt. Hon. The English Houses of Parliament', *Memorial of the Church Missionary Society* (London, 27 May 1853), 72–8, appendix C: trans. from Tamil.

[7] Madras Public Consultations & Proceedings (MPC/P) (No. 1 of 4 Mar. 1818), Tamil Nadu Archives (TNA): 453: 759–61. Rhenius had been involved before going to Tirunelveli. MPC/P (No. 27, of 22 Apr. 1834), TNA: 620. 1238–50.

government involvement in 'idolatrous practices'.[8] These were listed as:
managing properties and functions (for thousands of 'Hindu' temples);
protecting pilgrimage sites; requiring Christian soldiers and sepoys to attend
'heathen' festivals (in violation of their consciences); '[forcing] thousands of
poor, defenceless peoples to leave their homes and, at the risk and even the
cost of their lives' to drag great Temple 'Idol' Cars in annual processions
(*Rath Yatras*); and turning a blind eye to hundreds of thousands of 'dancing
girls' (*devadasis*), who were being consigned to perpetual temple prostitu-
tion. Disclaiming '*in any degree*, to violate the liberty of conscience so fully
and justly accorded to the Mahomedan and Heathen elements of
the Company's empire',[9] Corrie invoked his authority as a prelate of the
Church of England and demanded redress. He might as well have been
spitting against the wind. The government's response was swift, ruthless,
and implacable. Such issues were altogether too potentially dangerous to
allow any meddling. All had to be made to understand that this was not
England; and the Lords Spiritual of the Church did not have the same
authority in India as they possessed within the United Kingdom. 'Great
Political and State questions' could not be made liable to 'private feelings of
individuals' or allowed to be 'misled by excessive zeal'.[10] The signatories,
several hundred strong, were severely reprimanded and their leaders either
forced to resign or sacked. Bishop Corrie was publicly rebuked. Peregrine
Maitland, the Commander-in-Chief, was allowed to resign and returned to
London where he then launched the Anti-Idolatry Connexion League
against the Raj.[11]

But it was the social revolution mounted by low-caste or *āvarna* Chris-
tians that provoked the sharpest reactions. Issues over which converts and
their opponents came into collision were those which threatened the social
structure itself. Laws to abolish 'inhuman behaviour'—such as widow
burning (*sati*), ritual murder (*thugi*), hook swinging (*charakipujar*), blood
sacrifices of humans (*meriah*, etc.), female infanticide, forced labour, and
various forms of 'slavery' that were a consequence of agitations by reformers
in India, both indigenous and alien—were gradually passed and enforced.[12]

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[8] Lord Bishop of Madras [Daniel Corrie] to the Hon. Sir Frederick Adam, Governor-in-
Council, Fort St George, Transmitting Memorial, MPC/C (No. 60 of 11 Oct. 1836): TNA: 565.
4862–959.

[9] Ibid. 4871.

[10] Government of Madras (GOM) to Government of India (GOI), MPC/P (No. 61 of 11 Oct.
1836): 656. 4960–75; (No. 8 of Nov. 1836): 657. 5403–58 (para. 4).

[11] Anti-Idolatry Connexion League pamphlets: e.g. *A View of the British Connexion with Idolatry
at the Presidency of Madras* (London, 1841).

[12] James Hough, *On the Immolation of Hindoo Widows* (London, 1833), had put himself into this
fray. For a closer analysis of this entire subject, see Geoffrey Oddie, *Popular Religion, Elites and
Reform: Hook-Swinging and its Prohibition in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

Even enforcement of caste and occupational disabilities related to ritual pollution, backed by the floggings and tortures inflicted by local officials, came to be decried. Controversies over forced labour, over temple festivals, and forced official attendance of Christian sepoys at such festivals, became vociferous.[13] The 'breast cloth' controversy raged for fifty years in Travancore before Shanar/Nadar Christian women were allowed to cover their bosoms.[14] Similarly, while most 'outcaste' peoples had long been denied entry to *pukka* temples, enforced prohibitions against entering or even approaching 'public' buildings, such as government offices, became a stigma that low-caste (*āvarna*) Christians were no longer as willing to suffer endlessly and silently.[15]

Thus, as the catalogue of customary practices deemed to be inhumane grew longer and as these gradually came to light in press reports, public consciousness became aroused enough to mount campaigns that attempted to pressure the government to do something.[16] Enlightened social reformers in India, such figures as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and members of the Brahmo Samaj, joined missionaries in attempts to help oppressed peoples to escape from such thraldom. Yet, for many modern Indians, the question of 'social reform' was complicated, inasmuch as some became conflicted about what they interpreted as ways in which foreign agitators were 'using' defects within India to defame India as a whole. Problems of this kind would bedevil genuine attempts to 'reform' society by eradicating perceived social evils, most of which pertained to the position of upper-caste women.

In the face of such attempts, therefore, reactionary forces became alarmed and tried to mount various forms of resistance. The very status, if not the material well-being, of local ruling elites was at stake. Such reactions were especially acute in villages of the rural hinterland. Any radical increase in

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[13] *MOR*, 271 ff., 292, 392–7. *Letters of Lieutenant General Sir P. Maitland . . . Late Commander-in-Chief of Madras on the Compulsory Attendance of the British and Native Christian Troops at Idolatrous and Mahomedan Festivals and Processions under the Presidency of Madras* (London, 1841). There were at least another dozen 'Anti-Idolatry Connexion Publications' during the same period that addressed such issues.

[14] R. L. Hardgrave, 'The Breast-Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 5: 2 (1968).

[15] *MOR*, 392–7. *Petition of Christian Inhabitants of Several Villages in the Talooks of Kulleyoor, Shermadavy, and Nhungungery in the Zillah of Tinnevelly, South India, to the Right Hon. The English House of Parliament*, dated 18 Mar. 1833, and signed by 501 householders of 47 villages. This is appendix C. *The Memorial of the Church Missionary Society . . . Presented to the Right Hon. the Earl of Aberdeen, First Lord of the Treasury, Etc. Etc.* [*sic.*] *in Reference to the Renewal of Power to the Hon. East India Company* (London: CMS House, 27 May 1853), 73–80. Also see *The Disabilities of the Christian Natives of the British Possessions . . .* (London, 1830), for the private use of the Committee of the CMS.

[16] *Madras Torture Commission Report* (Madras, 1855), and annual reports in district records themselves, were revealing. If officials such as A. D. Campbell wrote of these things in the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, outraged Christians were far ahead of officials in exposing what they deemed to be barbaric behaviour.

literacy among low-caste converts, for example, provided them with means to escape from agrarian bondage. Upward mobility, into places of service or leadership within the congregations, and then outward mobility, away from the harsh servitude and rack-renting of paddy fields and toddy palms, could disturb the entire fabric of long-standing economic relationships. If the status of peoples in the lowest orders was changed, or if landless bonded labour vanished, the whole superstructure above them would be shaken. Escape from heavy exactions and forced labour (corvée) encouraged profound changes of attitude. Converts who became literate turned to new occupations and drifted to towns and cities. Many who migrated to Madras, for example, became ever more independent and prosperous, to such an extent that by the 1840s an area adjacent to George [Black] Town became known as the 'Tinnevelly Settlement'. Savings accumulated in Madras enabled the purchase of landholdings and proper houses. Such acquisitions in turn began to provoke bitter disputes, evictions, and dislocations. 'If the convert was a palmyra climber, he was deprived of his trees; if he was a tenant, eviction followed; if he had family property, he was disinherited.'[17] Perhaps one of the most severe and continuous of such conflicts concerned 'disabilities' which prevented converts from acquiring employment as government servants.[18] Employment discrimination involving radical changes in customs of ritual purity and increasing competition for positions of influence intensified already existing tensions between non-Christians of high caste and a growing, upwardly mobile, and self-conscious class of 'formerly low-caste' Christians. This, during the rest of the nineteenth century, resulted in mounting waves of Christian and anti-Christian communalism, especially in Tirunelveli. Complex collisions of this sort were almost inescapable.

'Hindu' Resistance to New Christians

The mounting intensity of Hindu–Christian communal troubles during the 1820s and 1830s, with sporadic incidents occurring at various times all over the Madras Presidency, was as nothing compared to the more serious explosions that occurred in the 1840s and 1850s. Again, the flashpoint was down in Tirunelveli. Since the Tirunelveli district contained over half of all Christians in the Madras Presidency (Catholic and non-Catholic) and since Madras was the centre for the Anglican-Christian ecclesiastical elites for all South India, this is hardly surprising.[19] But no less important than this was

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[17] R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India* (Tucson, Ariz., 1974), 42.
[18] Rhenius wrote at length on this subject. *MOR*, 392–7.
[19] Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening*, 32–40. R. Caldwell, *Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions* (London, 1857), 7–14.

the fact that Madras also contained the highest concentrations of the most powerful non-Christian notables. Mainly Brahman but also Baniya, these residents of the growing metropolis were not only the backbone of the Company's administrative apparatus but also consisted of some among the most advanced and ambitious and vociferous elements within an increasingly confident and self-conscious 'public'. Also, perhaps in no single district of India, with the possible exception of Thanjavur and similar historic temple towns such as Madurai or Tiruchirapalli, was there an older and more powerful or proud Brahman elite than in Tirunelveli. Such was their wealth, the splendour of their endowments, and the strength of their institutions, that they had long possessed the means for training some of India's most gifted and scholarly *pandits*. Beyond the city, in reaction to massive numbers of Christian conversions and responses to newly arising features of modern culture, Brahmans of Tirunelveli could mobilize many of the most able, articulate, and energetic partisans for the cause of the Old Tradition (*sanātana-dharma*). From such families of privilege in the deep south would come ambitious and restless youths. Many of these would be drawn to Madras in search of opportunity, success, and wealth. It is noteworthy that two of the most powerful families of what is now Chennai—once said to have owned or controlled much of the property and business along the 'golden mile' of Mount Road—would be the Kasturi Iyers and the T. V. Sundaram Aiyengars (Iyengars) (in Tanjore District). Both of these Brahman families came from almost the same locality. At the same time, by the middle of the nineteenth century, Madras was also gaining a special reputation for the vehemence of its Hindu–Christian conflicts. The Calcutta *Friend of India* noted: 'Perhaps there is no city in India, from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, which has a stronger claim to be considered the headquarters of Hindoo Bigotry than Madras.'[20] Yet, if Madras city was a bedrock of Brahmanical power, this was certainly strengthened by fresh cadres from many *mufassal* centres beyond Mylapore—from the great temple towns of Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Rameswaram, and Madurai, as well as from the temples of Tenkashi (Courtallam), Tiruchirapalli, and Tirunelveli itself.

What gave the Brahmans and Baniyas of Madras, as the governmental and commercial elite of the Presidency, such special advantages, in addition to advantages gained by their extremely rich cultural and financial heritage, was the advanced stage of their educational institutions and their appreciation of the advantages of modern technology.[21] This Madras elite, it may

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[20] *Madras Native Herald* (26 Apr., 10 May 1845), 199–254. *Memorial to Aberdeen*, Note 11 (13 Dec. 1851), a pamphlet on the hostility of the Madras *Crescent*. *The Spectator* (1 Dec. 1846), 1246, 1248; (19 Dec. 1846), 1310.

[21] Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening*, 104–115.

truly be said, had anticipated the essence of Macaulay's Minute by almost half a century.[22] Pachaiyappa Mudaliar, having gained a fortune in financial dealings with the Company, the Nawab of Arcot, the Raja of Thanjavur, and 'poligar' (*palaiyakkarar* or *palaiyagaru*) warlords before his death in 1794, had left a huge legacy. Proceeds of this legacy, after a celebrated and prolonged court case, served to provide an ongoing endowment for institutions of modern learning for the 'Hindu' elite.[23] Descendants of Maratha Brahmans who had once collaborated so closely with Sir Thomas Munro in creating the Presidency, individuals such as Vennelacunty Soob Row, who had voluntarily contributed to the establishment of new schools or had been early officers of the Madras School Book Society, were the beneficiaries of this cultural renaissance.[24] Generations after, such Brahmans, who had begun to gain such fluency in English language and literatures from the Thanjavur schools established by Schwartz and his most gifted 'Helper' (*Upadesiar*), had passed on such knowledge by means of the sacred-and-secret apprenticeships that had for so long become hallowed traditions within their families. It was such people that had formed the Hindu Literary Society and, in 1834, an English school. Vennelacunty Soob Row claimed that there were 500 such schools along Mount Road during the 1820s—some of which were undoubtedly fraudulent in their claims or of wretched quality.[25] Yet, by 1839, the then Governor of Madras, Lord Elphinstone, had received a special petition from a delegation of this gentry. Supported by some 70,000 signatures, this strongly endorsed the establishing of schools of higher learning in Madras, also asking for a modern university, a law school, and a modern medical school.[26] Thus, by the 1840s, high-caste gentry of Madras were already well organized. More seriously, on such issues as schoolboy and schoolgirl conversions, caste privileges, marriage and inheritance laws, they had already had their first brushes with Tamil Christians and foreign missionaries.[27]

[22] See earlier references to schools set up in Thanjavur, Ramnad, Shivaganga, by Schwartz and Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar. This gave Maratha Brahman youths special advantages in gaining admission to government service. Lord Elphinstone's minute reflects how this felt need was expressed within elite society. Ibid. 58–68.

[23] Ibid. 28–36. Also C. S. Srinivasachari, *History of the City of Madras* (Madras, 1939), 50–2; and 'Pachaiyappa: His Life, Times, and Charities', *Centenary Commemoration Book of Pachaiyappa's College* (Madras, 1942).

[24] Vennelacunty Venkata Gopal Row (ed.), *Autobiography of Vennelecunty Soob Row* (Madras, 1873).

[25] Ibid., in report for Madras School Book Society.

[26] George Norton, *Native Education in India* (Madras, 1848), gives a good summary of this subject and its history.

[27] *Anti-Idolatry-Connexion Publications* (London, 1840 onwards), over a dozen pamphlets. *No. VI: A View of the British Connexion with Idolatry at the Presidency of Madras* (London, 1841) typifies Christian views. 'Strictures on a Hindu Memorial from Madras, with Reference to Certain Clauses in the Draft of the Law Commission . . . Affecting the Rights and Property of Converts to Christianity', *Madras Native Herald* (26 Apr., 10 May 1845), 201–33. Petitions and counter-petitions were submitted to the government..

Hindu–Christian Disputes and Encounters

By 1845, news of serious disturbances going on in Tirunelveli reached Madras. These, going back at least twenty years, echoed events of 1801. During the previous four years alone, some 18,000 new conversions had been recorded, many of them in villages of Nullur Taluk—7,000 in 1841 and 6,800 in 1845.[28] John Thomas, a local CMS missionary, reported: 'I have no doubt that very soon the whole Shanar population of Tinnevelly will renounce heathenism and come over to Christianity.'[29] Again, as before, whole villages had turned Christian overnight, their proper (*pukka*) temples again being converted into places for worship or into schools. This large-scale movement had been accompanied by the usual incidents. There were allegations that in some places 'idols' had been destroyed or shrines desecrated—events that had taken place 'frequently in the absence of the Missionary than otherwise'.[30] As a consequence, the fresh outbreaks of persecution that occurred suddenly took a violent turn. It was fearsome enough that a local *zamindar* arrived in his palanquin accompanied by troops of *lathi-wallahs* to whom he gave orders to demolish Christian buildings, appropriate belongings, and drive converts into the jungle to be 'hunted like wild beasts'; but the newly formed congregations faced the fury of an entirely new kind of 'counter-conversion' movement.[31] The Vibuthi Sangam or 'Sacred Ashes Society', formed two decades earlier, mounted a much more organized and sustained opposition. In the words of George Pettitt: 'The principal people of Trichendoor and Alvar Tinnevelly collected together—300 to 400—have formed themselves into a society called the 'Viboothi' Sangam, the members of which are required to swear, by the sacred ashes, that they will be true to the old religion and customs of the country, and stand firm in their opposition to Christianity. The chief object is to insist upon every native continuing to smear his forehead with ashes, well knowing that compliance with this heathenist custom is in fact a ruination of the Gospel.'[32] Messages from leaders of this movement had gone out to the headmen of those villages whose people had recently turned

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[28] CMS Records (Tinnevelly: 1841–6). Paul Appasamy, *The Centenary History of the C.M.S. in Tinnevelly* (Palamcottah: Palamcottah Press, 1923), 79–112. Pettitt, Tucker, and others recorded such figures.

[29] George Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission of the Church Missionary Society* (London, 1851), 237–50.

[30] Appasamy, *Centenary History*.

[31] Robert Caldwell, *Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission* (Madras, 1881) (*REH*), 94, 105–6, 114, 131–3, 236–7. Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*.

[32] Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*; Sarah Tucker, *South Indian Sketches* (London, 1842), 77–8, is really taken from the letters of her brother. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 86, uses the same. Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*, 253–4.

Christian demanding that they attend a rally at Trichendur. Under threat of violence, they had then been 'forced to put this badge of Siva on their foreheads'.[33] Mobs of up to 500 had attacked several villages, 'pulling down prayer houses . . . and forcing them to smear their faces with ashes'.[34] Among leaders of this movement was an anti-Christian Shanar named Muttukutty. He announced himself, as the avatar of Narayan, to be a healer and miracle-man. Eventually his movement failed when he tried to set himself up as someone who could overturn Company rule. Another champion, Alagap-pan Nadan, announced that he was determined to drive people back to their old allegiance.[35]

The Vibuthi Sangam, it was soon learned, had received encouragement and support from the Chattur Veda Siddhanta Sabha ('Four Vedas', or Salay Street Society) of Madras.[36] This society, organized a few years earlier, had sent two organizers from Madras to help the Vibuthi Sangam leader in Tirunelveli—an organizer named Lakshminarsu. The Madras society, like the Tirunelveli society, had succeeded in mobilizing people across clean-caste (*divija*) lines and in generating support from men of wealth. The 'Society for Spreading the Philosophy of the Four Vedas' can be seen as having acquired all of those features associated with a modern voluntary missionary movement. It had its own press, published its own paper, and distributed tracts in the name of *sanātana-dharma*. It sent out agents to recruit new members and gain financial support; and it kept up a membership list, with a network of contacts—doing so by means of newsletters—with members all over the southern *mufassal* districts. It spared no pains to vilify its arch foes—namely, low-caste (*āvarna*) Christians and the foreign missionaries who were helping them. Hoping to gain sympathy among Native and European officers of the government, this society sent out information with complaints that conveyed extravagant charges of murders, plunders, and other crimes allegedly committed by Christians. It even had its own 'mock Christian' form of worship service, 'substituting the Puranas for the Bible, giving expositions of their *slokams* and the stories of [deities], and attacking Christianity [with a] doxology and a benediction in which Brahma, Vishnu and Siva were substituted for the Christian Trinity'.[37]

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[33] Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*, 253–4. References in records to purifying ashes (*Vibuthi* or *shuddam*) forced onto foreheads are very common.

[34] Ibid. 202.

[35] R. Hardgrave, *Nadars of Tamilnad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 51. Appasamy, *Centenary History*, 82, 90. I have in my own possession a pamphlet 'On the Tinnevelly Mission' (Feb. 1844), without author or publisher, which gives us a vivid glimpse of these small movements.

[36] Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*, 86–7. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening*, 42–3, 143. CMS Records: P. Schaffter's letters.

[37] Appasamy, *Centenary History*.

This southern movement was, in many ways, comparable to the Dharma Sabha in Bengal (f. 1829). It was the first non-Christian and anti-Christian movement formed in Madras. Together with the Vibuthi Sangam of Tirunelveli, it mobilized people of the deep south and began to give definition to a modern Hinduism, the likes of which had never before existed.[38]

The Nullur disturbances of November 1845, the worst of their kind, set in motion a chain of events that was to have far-reaching implications. Foes hinted that local Christian leaders might have triggered these events. Whatever the case, strong-arm Maravars 'club-men' were again brought from Ramnad to Nullur specifically for the purpose of attacking the new Christians. Bullock carts were made ready for carrying away booty. When all was ready, Vibuthi Sangam partisans fell upon fourteen Christian villages near Nullur. All movable property was taken from those who refused to rub ashes on their foreheads, in token of their return to 'the old religion' (*sanātana-dharma*). Over 150 houses were destroyed; and their inhabitants, after being robbed of all possessions and livestock, were stripped, beaten, and put to flight. Several Christian men were seriously wounded and their women 'ravished'. Christians who escaped crowded into the township of Nullur. When news then came of the approach of gangs of armed men, these panic-stricken refugees immediately sent their women and children to Palaiyamkottai, along with an urgent plea to the Collector/Magistrate for police protection. Under the command of Jacob, their senior pastor (head catechist), all Christian men formed themselves into an armed brigade. Their encampment soon gathered a force of 300–400 men, with other men quickly coming to their help from other villages. Another strong body of men was stationed near the stone church in Nullur, and guards were posted all around the neighbourhood, so that there would be no surprise from any quarter. Paul Pacifique Schaffter, the devoted German friend of Rhenius who had returned to his old work at Nullur, wrote that he felt himself being transformed from a 'Missionary into a General-in-Chief'.[39] At that point government forces arrived and the situation was gradually brought under control.

In due course, over a hundred persons were apprehended. Police agents tracked two of the ringleaders to the 'Tinnevelly settlement' in Madras. There, after establishing their connection with the 'Salay Street Society' (aka 'Chatur Veda Siddhantha Sabha'), they were arrested and brought back under guard to Tirunelveli for trial. But as news of these events spread, an aroused community in Madras raised a defence fund and sent special

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[38] *Madras Native Herald* (10 May 1845), 223–4, makes this connection.
[39] Letter of Paul Pacifique Schaffter, dated 11 Nov. 1845, to MCC (rec'd London, 5 Jan. 1846). CMS Records of South India Mission (C I. 2/0 211. Letters, Journals, Reports of P. P. Schaffter: 1827–61. A. Letters). Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*, 385–91.

attorneys (*vakils*) down to Tirunelveli. At each stopping point along the road southward, large throngs turned out and greeted the prisoners with ovations. During the course of the trial, evidence was taken from the Brahman *tahsildar*, the principal Sadr Amin, and two European magistrates. But, when several witnesses among new converts changed their testimony and cross-examination revealed that they had been tampered with by the defence *vakils*, the witnesses themselves were found guilty of perjury and sentenced. In the end, however, most of the defendants were acquitted. Those who were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment immediately appealed their convictions. Petitions were submitted by several prominent Tirunelveli notables complaining that they had suffered persecution by local European officials. They accused officials of having brought trouble upon local people by their strong partiality and sympathy for local Christians. The Madras High Court (Sadr Adalat), finding that evidence was not conclusive, reversed the rulings of the district court and ordered that all prisoners be released.[40]

Official Responses to Religious Controversy

At this point, Lord Tweeddale, the Governor, called for the judges of the Sadr Adalat to submit copies of all proceedings connected to the Tirunelveli appeals, including all evidence and names of all persons involved.[41] It seems clear, however, from private correspondence between Lord Tweeddale and Sir John Hobhouse, chairman of the Board of Control in London, that much of the blame for this decision, and for much that followed, lay with Henry Chamier. Chamier was first Member of the Governor's Council in Fort St George at a time when the Governor himself was hundreds of miles away at the hill station in Ootacamund. As 'Acting Governor' during Tweeddale's absence from the Presidency, he was the official who actually issued these ill-considered orders. Letters exchanged between 9 September 1846 and 25 October 1847 reveal a saga of increasing frustration and bitterness.[42] Action taken in Lord Tweeddale's name led to an immediate conflict with the judiciary. More than that, it provoked a storm within the Governor's Council, as well as a furore within the press of Madras, to whom

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[40] *Tweeddale Collection* (BL, OIOC): Mission records, newspaper files, government records, and papers.

[41] Ibid., 'Outrages between Hindoos and Native Christians in Tinnevelly', 'Board's Collections' [Board of Control] (BL, OIOC): No. 101,675 (Vol. 2136), Madras Judicial Department, 1846. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening*, 38–45 and my book on Guntur cover the same ground.

[42] *Tweeddale Collection* (BL, OIOC, Eur. MSS. F. 96), Home Private Letter Book I (pp. 198–202, etc., to 378) and Private Letters from Home (Nos. 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, and 57).

inside information was surreptitiously leaked.[43] One article, 'Animadversions on the Proceedings of the Sudr Fouzdarry Adalat [High or Appellate Court]', reveals how this long struggle commenced. At issue was the 'independence of the judiciary' or 'separation of powers'. *The Spectator* of Madras, from May to December of 1846, was filled with details of news reports, opinions, letters, and expressions of interest. These publications reflect positions that were taken on both sides, as found in the *Athenaeum* which supported the government and the *Crescent* which opposed the government and reflected 'Hindu' as well as 'Moosulman' views. This acrimonious 'public' controversy would boil and bubble for more than two years.[44]

   The Governor's conflict with the Sadr judges culminated in his finally suspending one defiant judge, whom he charged with leaking information to the press. On 31 October 1846, this particular judge attended a public event specially held in his honour. After receiving the 'Presentation of an Address from the Hindoo Community to Malcolm Lewin, Esq.' signed by some 12,000 supporters in Madras, he responded with a formal 'Answer'. This contained rhetoric that the government considered abusive. It was only a matter of time before he was dismissed from the bench and from government employment.[45] Within the Madras Council, meanwhile, long and acrimonious arguments were exchanged. Heated consultations within the Madras government spread to every department. These were especially hot within the judicial department where exchanges became loaded, day to day, with vitriolic elements of this controversy. Lord Tweeddale's own reactions became more and more paranoid.[46] His limited knowledge of India and his somewhat blind sympathy for missionaries had already stirred no small amount of consternation among authorities, both in Madras and in London. These authorities had already become especially provoked by his callous use of the term 'heathen'.[47] During his governorship, voices

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[43] 'Board's Collections', India Office Records: Collection No. 100, 341 (Vol. 2126): Madras Judicial: 1846, p. 330.

[44] *Friend of India and Bengal Hurkuru* (Calcutta), issues in BL, OIOC, 2 (p. 543), 18, 21, 25, 27 June; 2 (p. 630), 4 (pp. 636–7), 9, 14, 16, 18, 23, 25, 31 June, 1 July (p. 737), 11 Aug.; 22 (p. 905), 24, 26 (p. 924), 29 Sept., 3, 6, 8 (p. 964), 10 (p. 972), 13, 15, 27, 29 (pp. 1034–7) Oct.; 7, 14, 17, 19, 26 (p. 1234) Nov.; and 1, 5, 19, 22, 29 Dec.

[45] *Spectator*, 14 Nov. 1846, pp. 1094–5. Malcolm Lewin, as an enemy of Company rule, published *Torture in Madras* (London, 1857) and, after the Mutiny, *The Way to Lose India* (London, 1857).

[46] *Tweeddale Collection* (BL, OIOC, Eur. MSS. F. 96), Home Private Letter Books I and II: Letter to Fitzgerald and Vesci, 10 July 1842; to Lord Ripon, 2 Oct. 1846; to Sir Charles Napier, 13 Oct. 1846.

[47] Ibid., Home Private Letter Book II (Letters of 4, 8 June, 9 July 1847), pp. 313–20. 'Board's Collection' No. 112, 093: Madras Judicial Proceedings, 1847, pp. 1–30. 'On the Governor's Minute Respecting Official Use of the Word "Heathen"', also *Madras Judicial Consultations* (Tamilnad Archives; Vol. 4439), No. 29 of 11 Oct. 1847.

within the administration had become more open, numerous, and vocif-
erous than ever before. While these voices tended to share the Governor's
views, albeit privately, others in high places, officers with long years in
India, saw dangers in such language and gave ominous warnings. Yet, such
old hands as Henry Chamier, Walter Elliot, Patrick Smollett, or James
Dykes could only say so much, tied as they were by the restraints of
their official positions within government ranks. Smollett and Dykes
would later express their grave concerns in books that they published.[48]
Letters of Sir Walter Elliot and his wife Maria to his cousin Lord
Elphinstone, who had preceded Tweeddale as Governor of Madras
(1838–42), show how he had occupied a ringside seat to the furore and
how he had beheld it.[49]

    Within ranks of the city gentry, the noise of civil strife echoed with
increasing intensity, dividing both the local gentry and the European
community in such a way as to allow little room for those who sought for
accommodation and compromise. This strife also echoed within interested
circles in Britain, not to mention Bombay and Calcutta. People in these
places received a steady stream of communications from each side. On the
side were the raucous and strident voices of those who, like the Scottish
missionary John Anderson, saw themselves in a 'holy war' against 'Hea-
thendom' and who kept up a steady fire of pamphlets and protests against
the social evils that had long been allowed by the 'Hindoo' and 'Idolatrous'
Company's government. Anderson's frequent letters and responses to *The
Spectator* and *The Athenaeum*, especially his article 'On the Present State of
the Hindoo and Mahomedan Community in Madras and Triplicane', did
little to increase public tranquillity.[50] Court cases over the conversion of a
Brahman boy named Raghaviah, and then again over a Brahman girl named
Muniatha, raged furiously during the same period. A judicial decision by Sir
W. W. Burton inflamed sentiment all the more. For some people, whose
audience was as much in Britain as in India, the presence of Lord Tweeddale
in the governorship was 'providential'. Other Europeans, either those in
Company service or non-official individuals in business or professional life,
were either alarmed at missionary excesses or, for various reasons, sympa-
thized with Hindus. Many of these influential individuals had long been
resident in the country. Some, like George Norton or John Norton,
attorneys who were not related, and others with commercial or professional
interests, saw the alienation of 'Hindoos' as having implications altogether

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[48] Patrick Smollett, *Civil Administration in Madras* (London, 1858), Rough Notes from Personal
Observation; and J. W. B. Dykes, *Salem: An Indian Collectorate* (London, 1853). *Elphinstone
Collection* (BL, OIOC, Eur. MSS. F. 46–8).
[49] *Elphinstone Collection* (BL, OIOC, Eur. MSS. F. 87).
[50] Issues (18, 25, 29, May 1844), 318–20, 335–6, 344–6.

too ominous for them to contemplate.[51] Meanwhile, in London, a steady stream of Anti-Idolatry Connexion League pamphlets brought increasingly heavy pressure to bear upon British authorities, both in Parliament and in the Government of India, as also in the three presidencies.[52] The titles of these incendiary tracts were sufficiently instructive and revealing, in themselves, to persuade many in Britain to consider the Company's rule in India to indeed be a 'Hindu Raj'.

Hindu leaders closely followed these events with concern. A circle of these—Gazulu Lakshmanarasu Chetty, C. Narainaswamy Naidu, A. Annaswamy Chetty, and their friends—took steps to organize a huge public meeting. Its purpose was to adopt and then sign a 'Memorial' to the Company's Court of Directors and also to bestow a mark of public thanks on Lewin for his ongoing struggle 'to maintain the independence' of the judiciary. Alarmed at the tumult and excitement generated by this meeting, mounted police and military were called upon to take precautionary steps for the sake of civil order and safety. Throngs of high-caste 'Hindus' gathered 'in the rooms of Patcheapah's Institution, in the early evening of Wednesday the 7th October 1846'.[53] The main grievances that were set forth in detail listed what were deemed to be violations of 'the Civil and Religious rights and privileges' of Indians by Christian missionaries, aided and abetted by certain European officials. Troubles in Tirunelveli were stressed. Tirunelveli, they alleged, had recently become 'the emporium of missionaryism' and 'proselytism'; moreover, unfair official partiality and patronage of missionaries by the Collector, E. B. Thomas, brother of the Chief Secretary (J. F. Thomas), had brought about a 'sinister connection' between 'a clandestine petition' in March 1846 by missionaries to the Governor, Lord Tweeddale. Worse yet, there were charges of government intrusion into the impartiality of the Sadr Adalat. Tweeddale denied these charges and blamed 'a small and vicious party' for impugning his government and for fomenting unfounded 'Hindu fears' among local people.[54] The fact that 12,000 signatures (*chevralu*) supported the memorial placed before

[51] Ibid. (3, 10, 22, Sept. 1846). George Norton, *Proselytism in India* (Madras, 1848); and *Rudimentals* (Madras, 1841). John Bruce Norton, *The Administration of Justice in Southern India* (Madras, 1853), *A Letter to Robert Lowe . . . &c.* (Madras, 1854), discloses fears and anxieties about the ills of the Raj in Madras.

[52] Titles of seven Anti-Idolatry Connexion League Papers (Pamphlets) are in the Bibliography.

[53] *Proceedings of the Public Meeting of the Hindu Community of Madras on 7th October 1846* (Madras, 1846); and also *The Memorial of Hindu Inhabitants of Madras Presidency to the Court of Directors, of 12th May 1847* (Madras, n.d.).

[54] Tweeddale to Hobhouse, 26 Oct. 1846: in *Tweeddale Collection* (BL, OIOC, MSS. Eur. F. 96). Home Private Letter Book II, No. 6. The stormy events of 1841, not detailed here, are well covered in Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening*, 34–7. Also see Pettitt, *The Tinnevelly Mission*, 435–50.

Parliament, Madras notables believed, suggested that it might have been wiser for him to have paid closer attention to Hindu fears. For the rest of the decade and into the next, Hindu leaders continued to be obsessed with their fears of missionaries. They never quite forgot events in 1841, nor John Anderson's role in school conversions.[55] When eighteen Tirunelveli Christians and missionaries strongly denied such charges in their 'Statement' of 14 November 1846 in the *Spectator*, the aroused 'Hindu' gentry made no attempt to hide their contempt. Only one week after the huge meeting in Pachaiyappah's Hall, editors of the *Crescent* observed: 'The Hindus stand aloof from the Europeans, the influential part of whom, i.e. the Evangelicals, they look upon as their declared and implacable enemies.'[56]

The Madras Hindu Community was formed for political agitation related to religious apprehensions. Stretching across the respectable, 'clean' castes or 'twice-born' (*dvija*), it drew together communities in ways that had never before been done. What the Vibuthi Sangam and the Sadur Veda Siddhanta Sabha had done secretly, new organizations soon did openly and in 'public'. As a consequence, secret societies that could never be passed as 'loyal opposition' soon faded into the shadows. Earlier voluntary associations, such as the Madras School Book Society and the Hindu Literary Society of the 1820s and 1830s, had failed to generate the same level of solidarity. During the 1850s, however, those same leaders who had given religious and political identity to the Hindu community launched the Madras Native Association. In February 1852, at 'a large meeting of the Native Inhabitants of the Presidency', a decision was made to form a Madras branch of the British Indian Association.[57] From that time onward, and into the next decade, the Madras Native Association, which later turned into the Madras Mahajana Sabha, served as the main vehicle for political mobilization, and the local forerunner of what would later become the Indian National Congress.

'Hindu' Establishment and the State

As the foregoing narratives have shown, the role of the Company, and of its governments, was not insignificant. From its origins, in terms of the inner logic of power, Company agents had rarely been anything other than opportunistic. Its local government had recognized what existed and had co-opted whatever it found into its own structures of power. In this manner, wherever possible, it broadened its bases of support by incorpor-

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[55] Madras *Spectator* (15 Oct. 1846) cited it.
[56] Ibid.
[57] *Petition to the Imperial Parliament from the Members of the Madras Native Association . . . 10th December 1852* (Madras, 1852).

ating existing religious institutions into its own system, managing them and reinforcing them wherever they existed and positively contributing to, and even participating in, religious ceremonies. Not only was this so, but this was done with each religious community and each religious institution in direct proportion to its preponderance or its hold upon a particular local society. This logic serves to explain how the 'unofficial', but actually de facto or operative, 'civic religion' of the Company's empire was genuinely 'Hindu'. It was Hindu in every meaning of the term. The construction of a system of ideologies, myths, ceremonies, rituals, and institutions, as encouraged and strengthened under the authority of the imperial state, served the interests of that state, reinforcing its legitimacy and enhancing its sway in the hearts of its subjects or devotees. What happened, such thinkers as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Kautilya would have understood. Civic religion and the state, as a monstrous Leviathan, were mutually dependent, mutually reinforcing, and mutually supportive, each essential to the other. State churches, like 'civic', 'official', or 'political religions' whatever their ideological garb, have tended to perform this function, with varying degrees of efficiency and success, in virtually every political system. Unknown to British authorities in London, a tacit 'Silent Settlement' undergirded relations between Hindu elites and British merchants and rulers. The very foundations of imperial power would remain implacably opposed to any kind of Anglican or Christian establishment in India.[58] This Raj was, in many respects, a very 'Hindu Raj'.

For obvious reasons, therefore, prior to 1813 and all the way back to its 1639 linkage to the Sri Venkateshwara Temple in Tirupati, the Company always strenuously opposed any formal attempt to open its domains in India to Christian missionaries. For equally obvious reasons, after 1813 it was not anxious to disclose the full extent or import of its close relationships with 'Hindu' religious institutions. The constitutional foundation of this relationship was formally codified—for Bengal, in Regulation X, and for Madras, in Regulation VII of 1817. But this law only formalized what had already long been the practice of Company agents throughout the continent. By its provisions, this law incorporated all religious endowments and temple institutions (*pagodas*, *mathas*, *ināms*, etc.) into structures of the state. In effect, this law made the Madras Board of Revenue responsible for the finances, governance, maintenance, and operations, not only of many tens of thousands of *pukka* temples, but also of all their festivals (*melas*, *pujas*, etc.), both great and small. This meant that Company officers, almost invariably Brahmans, not only audited the books and kept watch on the premises of

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[58] R. E. Frykenberg, 'The Silent Settlement', in *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia: An Anthology of Recent Research* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977).

Hindu places of worship and pilgrimage; but they actually guarded, super-
vised, and 'participated' in all 'events' at these places. For the military, this
meant attending more than the regular *pujas* and buffalo or goat sacrifices of
their sepoy regiments, a tradition begun long before 1817; it also meant
standing on parade or on watch at the great festivals of Jagannatha at Puri
and of Sri Venkateswara at Tirupati, as well as of Minakshi-Sundareswarar
of Madurai, of similar events before deities at Kanchipuram, Kalahasti,
Mylapore, Rameswaram, Srirangam, and a host of other places. More
than that, from revenue-free endowments of countless estates, villages,
and plots of land that belonged to these religious establishments—their
sum coming to over 10 per cent of all arable lands, and these some of the
richest, best–irrigated, double-crop bottom lands of each village—these
institutions and their staffs grew fat with the surpluses and tithes of the
countryside, doing so on the backs of countless millions of menial and
'polluting' landless labourers. To top all, not only did each centre of
pilgrimage and worship receive an extra harvest of cash-and-kind contri-
butions, commensurate with its size, from hundreds or thousands, or
hundreds of thousands if not millions of devotees, but many Brahmans
themselves held *agraharams*, *maniams*, *shrotriyams*, or other plots of land
which were either lightly assessed or wholly free of taxation. Truly it can
be said that the Company's Raj, in many parts of India, was a Hindu empire.
By the end of the century, non-Brahman foes were beginning to mount
political campaigns against this 'Brahman Raj'.[59]

   On the other hand, however, the more the Company came under the
actual and direct control of ministers of the Crown in London, whose
positions rested more and more upon the confidence of Members of
Parliament (who in turn represented ever widening constituencies), the
more anomalous, complicated, and contradictory the Company's position
and role became vis-à-vis religious institutions in India. After all, since
chaplains were needed for each of its stations in India, the Company itself
had long possessed its own Ecclesiastical Department. Furthermore, the
seats of the Lords Spiritual constituted a powerful block within the govern-
ing establishment of Great Britain. Opinions at Lambeth Palace could
hardly be ignored in Whitehall. And beyond the Church of England (and
Church of Scotland, etc.) there were more strident voices, with increasing
clamour from the chapels of the dissenters. The impact of public opinion
concerning 'Pietistic' interests had been at least as profound, and undoubt-
edly much stronger within Britain itself than within South India. Aroused
by the Evangelical Awakening, some consciences had become acutely

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[59]   R. E. Frykenberg, 'The Silent Settlement'. Chandra Y. Mudaliar, *The Secular State and
Religious Institutions in India* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974), 12–18, gives us a solid, short overview.

aware of social evils. Social evils were seen, ideologically, as being linked to 'corruption' already existing in the unregenerated condition of each person's soul; and, hence, due to the ignorance and uneducated condition of man's mind. And if man's primal condition, with attendant social evils, could be so bad in Britain, how could it be much different in the world beyond? What about evils suffered by fellow human beings in India? *Researches in Asia...*, published by Claudius Buchanan, told of incredibly inhuman behaviour, of blood sacrifices, cruelties, degradations, 'devil' worship, and misery among the supposedly civilized 'Hindoos' as well as the 'heathen'. At least ten editions of this book were quickly bought. Consciences seared from guilt for not showing more concern and compassion demanded action. After 1813, Evangelicals in Parliament (and 'saints' in the Company) could no longer be denied.

Not all Evangelicals wanted the same thing. Some were more sweepingly radical while others were conservative. Some, constrained by the Anglican establishment, were zealous for its expansion as the only proper vehicle for conversion and social reform, and were anxious to bring the Company into conformity with ecclesiastical ambitions. Others were appalled by any form of ecclesiastical imperialism and equally shocked at the Company's 'heathen' actions in India. All they wanted was for the Company to get out of the way and stop hindering the Word of God. But, no matter who they were, Evangelicals tended to agree in thinking that the Company was a major obstacle to the Gospel, if not also an outright disgrace to the avowedly Christian nation from whence its policy was supposed to come. Their task was to modify, if not reverse, Company policies and practices, regardless of what was deemed to be its lack of any underlying ideological or moral principles.[60]

In plain terms, the Company was caught in the middle. And, as a result, its governments in India were repeatedly and increasingly clobbered from both sides. Both Hindus and Christians saw themselves as betrayed—first by the Company and then by the British Crown. Both sides organized protests and sent petitions to the Court of Directors and to Parliament. The process, of appeal and counter-appeal, petition and counter-petition, and memorial and counter-memorial, that had begun as early as 1801 and had intensified in each decade thereafter, until long after the Company itself had ceased to exist, was relentless in its momentum. At its very heart, the issue of conversion and consequences flowing from conversion had enormous ramifications. Implications of the possible impact of conversion and social reforms generated by radicalizing mobilization of newly converted

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[60] Louis F. Knoll, 'State and Religions in British India: 1814–1865' (UC-Berkeley, GTO unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1971), is filled with useful data on this.

communities were enormous, if not even revolutionary. Radical changes in social structure, however seemingly small when seen in purely quantitative terms, could provoke sharp and even violent reactions. When various forms of opposition and retaliation occurred, from violent persecution to peaceful petition, these in turn produced counter-actions. Ultimately, by taking pages from the book of the converts themselves and by borrowing from both the strategy and the tactics of the radicals and reformers, opponents learned how to build effective counter-movements. By developing forms of counter-conversion and by mobilizing effective measures of counter-revolution, the older established elites of India—Brahmans and high non-Brahmans (Sat-Sudra castes)—were able in some measure to stem the tide of Christian conversion and to contain some of its most radical social consequences. Thus elements of modern Hinduism and nationalism were generated. Had it not been for the impact of conversion, both in India and in Britain, and for the mounting demands for changes in social behaviour from the radically sensitized consciences of new converts, whose demands for release from inhuman conditions, practices, rites, and pollution rules were incessant, the Company and its governments would not have had to face so much trouble.

When seen in such perspective, therefore, the role of government appears not to have been so much directive of cultural and social change as responsive to it. Social pressures brought about only such minimal accommodating adjustments as were useful for preserving or strengthening the internal mechanisms of the political system. Government behaviour, determined in no small measure by its own arithmetic, as reflected in the decisions of its more sensitive servants, was opportunist. But when it was not sensitive nor opportunistic enough, explosions occurred. Such failures of sensitivity in the north led to the Great Rebellion (or Mutiny) of 1857. But in the south, where the vested interests of too many elites were already tied to spokes of the Great Wheel or *Mahachakra* of the existing Raj, opportunistic adjustments and compromises had outweighed failures. Neither radical nor reactionary pressures were strong enough to overwhelm each other. Enough concessions were made on both sides to enable an orderly progress into the modern world. So it was that the Wheel of Empire in India, in apparent contradiction, blended a hybrid Hindu-Christian hub linked by Hindu spokes to a largely Hindu rim wherein restive Christian communities strove for protection and respectability.

Struggles over Defining 'Public' Space

It is difficult for anyone in the twenty-first century to realize that there was once a time when almost no 'public' facilities existed. Indeed, as far as any

ST. THOMAS CATHEDRAL PALAI

FIRST CHURCH WAS FOUNDED IN THE YEAR 1002 A.D.

IT WAS RECONSTRUCTED IN 16TH & AGAIN IN 17TH CENTURY

WHICH IS NOW KEPT INTACT

IN 1788 THIS CHURCH WAS RAISED TO THE STATUS OF "VALIA PALLY"

BY H.H. POPE PIUS VI THROUGH MSGR. THOMAS PAREMAKAL,

GUBERNADOR OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CRANGANNOOR

THIS WAS RAISED AS CATHEDRAL BY H.H. POPE PIUS XII ON 25.7.1950

WHEN THE DIOCESE OF PALAI WAS ERECTED

THIS NEW CATHEDRAL CHURCH IN THE NAME OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

IS BUILT (1977-81) AT THE SITE OF THE HOLY MAGI

(MAGUSANMAR-THREE KINGS) CHURCH CONSTRUCTED IN 1818.

semblance of a 'common' or 'public' life was concerned, there was almost nothing comparable within the continent of India. Such things 'public' as there might have been were limited to very small circles of rulers and their supporters, as found within the palace or the temple. Even in Britain in the eighteenth century, with hereditary peers ('upper classes') sitting in the House of Lords and small numbers of upper 'middle classes' occupying more and more seats in the 'Commons', 'public' space was extremely constricted, limited only to a very select few who owned property and were allowed to vote.[61]

Within the Indian continent, except for such cities as Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, even by the early nineteenth century, there were virtually no 'public' hotels or restaurants, much less 'rest rooms', no 'public' places where a traveller might find and pay for a night's lodging. Such traditional places as there were—called *chattrams* or *choultries* and such—were endowments made by and for Brahmans, or made by and for other special communities, and preserved just for themselves. Branches of a Saiva Siddantha, for example, provided for its own non-Brahman members. Likewise, there were no 'public' gardens or parks. Such things were 'private': they were enclosed by walls and existed within communal (or 'private') compounds (or *muhallas*). Most significantly, while there were 'highroads' linking towns and cities, these were appendages to royal prerogative, constructed by and for a monarch and his minions, including certain of those select communities, invariably non-polluting, upon whom he depended for some sort of support—to whom he specifically extended such privileges. Something equivalent to a 'king's road' or 'royal highway' (*raj-viti*), meant for the pure, was in the main street within any village or town. Usually it approached and/or encircled a palace or temple—any place of dwelling for a prince or deity—that was 'private' or 'special' and 'non-polluting'. One may even suggest, therefore, that distinctions between 'public' and 'private' were concepts that did not yet exist in India's past, so much as distinctions between things 'pure' and 'impure' (or 'polluting'). Such distinctions came to a head in relations between newer converts from lower castes and high-caste elites.

The narrative that follows attempts to show how a severe crisis could arise even as truly 'public' institutions were beginning to come into existence, take shape, and then expand. Such 'public facilities'—a phrase that still retains certain noxious and polluting connotations down to the present day—were bones of contention from the start. This particularly dramatic instance of strife and violence resulted from conflict over the use of 'public'

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[61] Lewis Bernstein Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn. 1963; originally published in 1929, and again in 1957).

roads and streets. Known as the 'Tinnevelly Disturbance of 1858', this
episode not only brought to a climax conflicted relations between Hindu
elites who were seen as 'arrogant and over-bearing...burn[ing] to exercise
their ancient tyranny over the low castes'[62] and low-caste Christians with
whom they had been increasingly at odds for several decades, but revolved
around the issue of whether or not all classes of people should not have
equal and free access and common use to all highroads and streets. On 10
December 1858—ten days after the Queen's Proclamation disclaimed any
desire of the part of her government to impose Christianity upon her
subjects and was paraded through the streets in a flower-bedecked palanquin
like an idol, to the sound of gun salutes, fireworks, and speeches[63]—an old
man died. A Christian for over thirty years, he was a weaver of the Kaikallar
(*Sengunthar* or 'Red Dagger') community whose separate quarter (*cheri*) lay
on the western perimeter of the town.[64] His body had to be carried to a
burial ground two miles away. 'The Town of Tinnevelly [was] surrounded
by paddy fields; there [were] only two roads out of it on its eastern side,
towards both Palamcottah and the public burning and burying ground, on
the banks of the Tambrapoorney river.'[65]

'New Street' (*Puthu Theru*) was 'the only street by which to reach the
causeway or avenue leading to the riverside between the paddy fields'.[66]
Prior to 1847, there had been no regular or proper road to the burning and
burying grounds. Inhabitants living in all streets had been obliged to cross
paddy fields, going through mud and water as best they could. When
leading gentry had complained about the inconvenience they suffered for
want of a *pukka* road, the District Magistrate (H. V. Levinge) had raised
voluntary subscriptions, used some discretionary funds, and employed con-
vict labour in order to build a broad new road, Ever since, this 'public road'
had been maintained at government expense.[67]

Disputes over use of this 'New Street' had soon arisen. Wealthy and
powerful Vellalar residents, many of them government servants, demanded
that Kaikallars and lower-caste people be prohibited from using this route
for funerals. In 1853, the District Collector had posted an ordinance for-
bidding the lower castes from using any main or 'public' street. Even use of
bridges was forbidden. As a result, low-caste people had been obliged to

[62] *Madras Times*, 5 Jan. 1859. Also *The Spectator* of Madras, 4 Jan. 1859.
[63] *Madras Times*, Friday, 10 Dec. 1858, p. 2 (col. 4). *Madras Times*, 20 Dec. 1858, p. 3 (col. 2).
[64] Edward Sargent (CMS missionary) to H. Ames (Acting Sub-Collector in Charge), Palam-
cotta, 10 Dec. 1858: in *Supplement to the Madras Times*, Friday, 14 Jan. 1859, p. 2. (*STMT*).
[65] V. H. Levinge (Acting Magistrate) to T. Pycroft (Chief Secretary to Government), Tiru-
nelveli, 24 Dec. 1858, No. 406: *Parliamentary Papers* (*PP*) (1860), 3 (para. 3).
[66] Sargent to P. S. Royston (Secretary, CMS, Madras), Palamcotta, 6 Jan. 1859: CMS Archives,
London. Also printed in *STMT*, p. 1 (para. 2), and in CMS Register.
[67] V. H. Levinge to T. Pycroft, dated Tirunelveli, 31 Dec. 1858, No. 416: *PP* (1860), 8 (para. 11).

descend into irrigation canals and ditches and to walk along narrow, slippery paddy bunds in order to get from one place to another. Carrying dead bodies along paddy bunds became difficult, especially in the wet season. Even when they did this, Kaikallars could be fined for damage to rice crops while trying to carry bodies through water and mud.[68]

The death of the Christian Kaikallar brought the issue of who could use or could not use a 'public' road to a head. The Christian pastor (*Ayyar* or *Upadesiar*) and Christian relatives determined that Christian bodies should be carried along New Street. Local residents 'determined to resist the passage of the funeral on the high road or public street'.[69] A *hartal* was called; bazaar shops closed; and people gathered outside the Kaikallar quarter. Finding their way blocked and access to official protection denied, Kaikallar Christians turned to Edward Sargent, the CMS missionary. Sargent appealed to the British Acting Sub-Collector. All that was desired, he begged, was access to the burial ground 'without giving offence to any one' and 'without molestation'. There would be no music nor display 'to excite unkind feelings'. 'Everything', Sargent promised, '[would be] done quietly and orderly in a Christian manner.'[70]

The Collector-Magistrate, with only three hours of daylight remaining, turned matters over to his Indian subordinate, the Amin-Tahsildar. This ambitious official, having recently taken over the police establishment,[71] and dismissed the old police *Amin* and *Kotwal*, had put new police officers in charge. Ever since, several thousand armed militia (*kavalgarus*) had overawed the town. Later investigation showed that the Sub-Magistrate was the leading instigator of resistance to the Christian funeral.[72] As a result, the funeral was delayed for two days. In the heat, the dead bodies deteriorated rapidly. When chided, and told that Christians were being required to walk 'a quarter of a mile through mud and water', the exasperated Collector replied, 'There is no hardship in travelling a muddy road to natives. I cannot ascertain from the man whether Christianity makes him no longer a weaver by class.'[73] Fearing that non-Christian Kaikallars might accompany the funeral procession, he 'sent down four daloyets [shield-carrying guards] and a Duffadar to aid the Tahsildar in preventing any disturbance'. Also objecting to making such a serious decision 'at such short notice'

[68] Ibid.

[69] Sargent to Ames, from Palamcotta, 10 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 11; and also *STMT*, 2.

[70] *STMT*, 2. Also, Levinge to Pycroft, 31 Dec. 1858, No. 416 (para. 3); *PP* (1860), 5.

[71] *PP* (1860), 6 (para. 5).

[72] GOM Proceedings (No. 40) and Order Thereon, No. 122 (Madras, 28 Jan. 1859): *PP* (1860), 25 (para. 12), 29 (para. 29), 31 (36). For health reasons, a 'sunset' law required burial by sundown, or in 24 hours.

[73] Fourteen letters on the question were exchanged between Sargent and Ames in the two days of 10 and 11 Dec. 1858. *STMT*, 2–8, has texts of all 12 letters.

and pondering whether custom precluded Christian weavers as well as Kaikallars, he was informed that there were instances in which 'bodies, from even the lowest castes, had been carried out through the street from the Tinnevelly Dispensary'.[74]

Kaikallar Christians refused to give a written promise (*mochulka*) that, if an exception were made for them on this one occasion, they would never again disturb the peace by attempting to take another funeral down New Street.[75] On getting this reply, the Amin-Tahsildar locked up two non-Christian Kaikallar leaders for 'disturbing the peace' and for refusing to indicate that using New Street for funerals had never been their custom.[76] Describing themselves as 'a numerous, orderly, sober, industrious and tolerably wealthy class, to judge by their clothing and good substantial houses',[77] Kaikallars submitted a petition, declaring that they not only regularly paid their taxes,[78] that much of the prosperity of the town was due to their industry, and that to be denied the night to 'pass along public streets which [had] been drained and kept in repair by government out of the very taxes paid by them' was unjust.[79]

Faced with an impasse, the Christians and their leaders would not budge. To take the funeral down New Street would break the law. They were determined to slip and slide in the mud no longer. Nor could they sit still any longer. After two days, the unburied body was reeking; and matters could only get worse. Clearly 'the Christian people [could] expect no justice from Hindoo officials' and 'deprived of that protection which they [were] entitled] to expect', stop-gap arrangements had to be made.[80] Just adjacent to the Kaikallar quarter was an empty lot. Bought by Rhenius long before, and intended for a girls' school, it would have to do. At 4:30 p.m., the Amin wrote to the Collector: 'Sir. Almost all the bazaars are shut, and there is a great concourse of people.'[81] At five o'clock on Saturday evening 11 December, the Christians finally agreed. They did not want 'toties to take the body out and bury it in a ditch, like a dead dog or any piece of carrion'.[82] As the sun set, with the Amin sitting in a chair about twenty-five feet away,

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[74] *PP* (1860), 11–15. This quote is a memorandum written across one of Sargent's letters: ibid. 13.

[75] Ibid. 13.

[76] Sargent to Ames (Palamcotta, 14 Dec. 1858): *PP* (1860), 18–20.

[77] Levinge to Pycroft (Tirunelveli, 31 Dec. 1858): ibid. 6 (para. 6).

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Sargent to Ames (Palamcotta, 11 Dec. 1858): *PP* (1860), 13–14. *STMT*, 6–7.

[81] *STMT*, 6–7.

[82] Levinge to Pycroft, 31 Dec. 1858 (para. 9): *PP* (1860), 7. *PP* (1860), 14. By then, Sargent had sent two notes to the Christian community, recommending that they bury the body in the mission plot.

the grave was dug. Thousands of onlookers who pressed close had to be driven back by the armed peons. Just as the coffin was brought to the graveside, a huge 'yell or shout of victory' continued for several minutes. The funeral service being hastily read for fear of what might happen next, the coffin was lowered. At this point, 'another general shout . . . with clapping of hands along the whole line of the thousands of spectators' applauded as earth was put into the grave.[83] 'All this while', Christians later reported, officials looked on, enjoying the sport. 'Representatives of that government whose proclamation had been read in the hearing of so large a concourse only ten days before', assuring all that 'equal laws would be administered without regard or partiality to creed or caste', had broken its promises.[84]

Matters did not rest there. The Sessions Judge, upon appeal,[85] acted with amazing speed. Citing an appeal ruling (No. 82) of 1857, he declared that all public roads were 'open to all as such for passing to and fro, whether alive or dead', and that restrictions imposed five years earlier were illegal. He ordered the Acting Sub-Magistrate in Charge to see to it that, henceforth, 'the body is carried through the street in question without display or music of any kind, but quietly and decently, as becomes the burial of a Christian'; moreover, 'native Christians, whether dead or alive [were] to be protected in their just rights'.[86] When asked for further clarification about whether a public 'display, noise, and music [should be] allowed to all castes and classes' and whether this meant that 'one and all [should be] allowed to perform the funeral ceremonies common to their caste and religion, without any reference to the adverse opinion of those who dwell in the street',[87] the judge replied, 'the question as to the burial of other castes was not . . . before the Sessions Court'.[88]

Edward Sargent was deeply disturbed. But when he wrote a strong remonstrance against official behaviour in the recent incident,[89] he received a frosty reply. The missionary's serious charges had yet to be substantiated before a court of law.[90] He added: 'The road and path are exactly as the

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[83] Sargent to Ames, 14 Dec. 1858 (para. 12): *PP* (1860), 19–20.

[84] Ibid.

[85] C. H. Ames to E. Story (Sessions Judge), 11 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 15. Sargent wrote: 'This was an oversight of Mr. Ames. I wrote [to Ames] as follows: "It is my intention to try the justice of this day's proceedings when the whole matter can be calmly investigated".' *STMT*, 8.

[86] Extract from Proceedings of Sessions Court of Tirunelveli, 11 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 15–16. Also *STMT*, 9–10.

[87] Ames to Story, from Tirunelveli, Tutacorin, 13 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 17. Two letters were sent, one reporting the burial and one asking for a further clarification.

[88] Extract from Proceedings of the Sessions Court of Tirunelveli, 14 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 17–18.

[89] Sargent to Ames, 14 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 18–20. But Sargent also went to some pains, as he had done all along, to show that he bore no ill will and to make peace. *STMT*, 12–13.

[90] Ames to Sargent, from Tirunelveli, 15 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 20.

Tahsildar described them to me; the only wet part is in a lane in the town, and the mud and water extend but for 50 or 60 yards. I walked myself perfectly dry shod from one end of the paddy fields to the other; the path is raised above the tops of the paddy crop.' He did not mention that, on a two-foot-wide bank, 'care would be required to carry a bier'.[91] Sargent countered by describing how 'notorious to the whole community of Tinnevelly' was police behaviour, and added: '[The] whole affair so serious[ly] affects the liberties of the Christian community in this province that I am prepared to take up the matter as a plaintiff and to act through my vakeel, who will present the case to you tomorrow.'[92] Apparently stung by this letter, Ames immediately wrote to the judge to say that no appeal had been intended. Finally, on 3 January 1859, after several exchanges, in which Sargent's attorney (*vakil*), Chedumbaranada Mudaliar, added cogent arguments, the District Judge declared that the real point at issue was whether or not 'Her Majesty's public high roads [were] open to all, living and dead' and explained: 'From the dead bodies of all castes, except Christians, having been previously carried through the street in question, without opposition, and the body in question being that of a Christian, it is evident that the present objection has arisen from hatred of Christians, and not because the caste of any one would thereby have been injured.'[93]

There the matter might have ended except that, on 21 December, another Christian died.[94] This time, the deceased was a convert from the untouchable Pallar community. While waiting to give testimony outside the District Headquarters (*huzur cutcherry*), he had died of cholera. His relatives, anxious to take the body home in their bullock cart, were ordered to leave the cholera victim in the government hospital (dispensary) where he had died. This was located in the centre of town, at the south–west angle of the Great 'Pagoda' (*Periya-Kudi*), or Great Temple.[95]

Such an event might have gone unnoticed, except for one thing. While low-caste people had never been allowed to carry dead bodies from their own residential streets into the Puthu Theru, persons dying in the hospital, whatever their caste, had previously been carried out by that street. But burials in such cases had always been considered to be 'acts of government'. Anyone dying in the government hospital, being considered a friendless

[91] Ames to Sargent, from Tirunelveli, 15 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 21.

[92] Sargent to Ames, Palamcotta, 17 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 21.

[93] Extract from Proceedings of the Sessions Court of Tirunelveli (E. Story), 3 Jan. 1859: ibid. 23.

[94] Sargent to Acting Sub-Collector (Palamcotta, 21 Dec. 1858): *STMT*, 13. 'He died there this morning of Cholera'; Levinge, Acting Magistrate (22 Dec. 1858), reported that death had occurred at 'seven o'clock at night'. *PP* (1860), 2, 29 (para. 28).

[95] *PP* (1860), 2, 29 (para. 28). As in the earlier case, Sargent was anxious not to arouse social animosity or communal feeling. Christian relatives who accompanied the corpse were willing to go any way the police might point out.

being, more to be pitied, had been carried to burial or burning grounds without any demur. Indeed, during the previous three years, of thirty-nine such persons who died in hospital, nineteen had been low caste and some of them had been Kaikallars.[96] Thus, the Acting Magistrate, H. V. Levinge, was shocked when he learned that shops were closed in the bazaar and that a large crowd were assembling in order to prevent the body from leaving the hospital, even insisting that it be buried within the hospital grounds.[97]

Rising tensions leading to violence began on 22 December. To avoid any confrontation, plans were made for carrying the body to the burial ground by the most direct and easiest road. Keeping a low official profile, he sent local police, under the command of their own 'head of police', to accomplish this task. But the Acting Magistrate quickly discovered how completely he had misjudged the zeal of his subordinate. The Christian burial party, having left the hospital with the body, were immediately stopped by a crowd. Then, unable to re-enter the hospital, they put the body down outside the police station (Kotwali). Christians being told that the body could be taken by the Mada Theru, a street occupied by prostitutes, their Head Catechist (*Upadesiar*), in order to prevent further trouble, agreed and signed an affidavit to this effect. But they then soon found that Mada Theru was also blocked by violent crowds.

At that point, the Magistrate issued a written order that any person who resisted passage of the body through the Mada Theru was to be arrested. When this was attempted, the tumult only increased and became more violent. Every attempt to lift the bier or to move it was met with a shower of brickbats. The Amin-Tahsildar, claiming that he feared for the Catechist's life, decided that he himself would return to the District Headquarters (Huzur Cutchery). There he reported that it had become impossible to 'remove the corpse' from the town centre.[98] At this point, seeing that civil order had broken down, the military were called upon for help.

Captain Augustus Ritherdon, commander of the local garrison at Palaiyamkottai, immediately marched to the edge of the town at the head of two companies of sepoys. One company was held in reserve; the other marched quickly into Tirunelveli. No trouble was anticipated and the call for military help was seen as unnecessary. No rifles were loaded or bayonets fixed. It was hoped that soft words and gentle persuasion might settle the issue. Sepoys were posted at cross-streets so as to prevent any obstruction in the main thoroughfare until there was 'scarcely a peon left'. Nevertheless trouble erupted.[99] As units marched forward and turned the corner into

[96] Edward Sargent to the CMS (Palamcotta, 6 Jan. 1859) (paras. 1–4): *STMT*, 1–2.
[97] Levinge to Pycroft, 24 Dec. 1858 (paras. 3–4): *PP* (1860), 3.
[98] Ibid. 1–3. CMS Report (Royston-Sargent), published in *STMT*, 14.
[99] Levinge to Pycroft (Tirunelveli, 31 Dec. 1858) (para. 10: 'Second Disturbance'): *PP* (1860), 8.

Hospital Road and came in sight of the Great Temple, a heavy barrage of
stones and bricks fell upon their rear. Further volleys followed. These,
lobbed from behind walled enclosures and from rooftops flanking the
military column, struck a number of sepoys, knocking down and hurting
some. No shots were fired; but front ranks were ordered to load. As the air
grew thick with flying objects, more sepoys were hit and Ritherdon himself
received a blow on his head.[100]

By this time, as sepoys reached the hospital, they were 'attacked'. Noth-
ing of the sort had 'ever been witnessed'.[101] Having ordered 'the bearers,
who were cowering in a shed close by, frightened out of their wits, to get
ready', the force moved 'through the Cutwalee' (police station) beyond
where the street was crammed with people. As stones flew and bounced at
his feet, the Acting Magistrate had 'to beat the bearers with [his] buggy whip
to make them take up the body'. These, having been placed under armed
guard, 'marched off pretty smartly'. Then, as crowds immediately began
rushing down the street towards them, sepoys came up to push people
back.[102] At that point the sound of 'a regular volley of musketry' was heard.
As the party rushed toward the place from which the firing had come, a
second volley sounded. At the scene, the main contingent of sepoys were
being severely bombarded. They were commanded to move down the
Palaiyamkottai Road. At the corner of the Great Temple, 'several people
were shot on the spot. One man . . . fell dead off the top of the Muntapum
where he and four others had got up to throw down stones; two or three lay
dead in the street; as the body and sepoys [came] down the street, a man
suddenly appeared and waved a cloth to the mob in the street to the north of
the pagoda; an immense crowd immediately ran down from it and met the
soldiery; the signal man darted through the pillars of the Muntapum and got
into a house; the rear ranks of the rioters not seeing the execution in front,
kept coming on, calling out to their front ranks to go on, as there were no
bullets in the muskets.'[103] Not until another volley was fired and sepoys with
fixed bayonets had charged and drove the mob back was it possible for the
detachment to make an orderly withdrawal. Even so, as the troops began to
withdraw, mobs closed in on their rear and harassed them with stones until
they reached the outskirts of town.[104]

After this, a shocked silence settled over the town. The Acting Magistrate
could soon report that 'the Town of Tinnevelly quickly quieted down' and

[100] From Captain Augustus Ritherdon, Commanding 2nd Extra Regiment No. I., at Palam-
cotta, to the Adjutant General of the Army, Ootacamund; dated 23 Dec. 1858, No. 389; *PP*
(1860), 3–5.
[101] Levinge to Pycroft, *PP* (1860), 8.
[102] Ibid. 9.
[103] Ibid.   [104] Ritherdon to Adjutant General, *PP* (1860), 4–5.

'continued [to remain] perfectly quiet, and that not only in its precincts, but throughout the whole district, the question of the right of all classes to a common use of the high streets and roads [was] considered finally settled'.[105] Little more was heard about the matter. As early as 24 December, he reported: 'I visited [the town] yesterday and again this morning; no excitement whatever appears; the people wear their usual orderly and respectful demeanour and carry on their usual trades; in fact, it is almost beyond belief that such an unfortunate event has occurred.' Only four days later, on 28 December, when another Kaikallar Christian died 'in the same street', the Acting Magistrate was able to order the body to be taken through the same street, the Puthu Theru. This time the body went 'unattended by any peon, and no one dared take the least notice of it'.[106]

What became known as the 'Tinnevelly Riot of 1858' aroused a flurry of controversy in the press and in pamphlet battles that continued for months. Nevertheless, the consequences were to be decisive. No longer would 'public' facilities, especially government-built and tax-supported 'public' roads and streets, be reserved only for the clean, the elite, and the privileged. 'Pollution' of public places by the lowly and poor and untouchable, while continuing to disturb the delicate sensibilities of the high-born and while provoking more covert and muted forms of protest, ceased to be an issue for respectable public debate. No longer would the interdiction of public streets be allowed to prevail. Nor would special privilege and/or disability receive such unqualified and unquestioned official recognition or legal sanction.[107] The letter of the Secretary of State for India, Charles Wood, confirmed the official position of the Empire that 'the public high streets in all towns are the property, not of any particular caste, but of the whole community, and every man, be his caste or religion what he may, has a right to the full use of them'.[108]

Meanwhile, in Tirunelveli itself, Sargent commented: 'The people are now getting a clearer view of the case, and blame themselves for objecting to the corpse being carried thro' Mada Teru. They don't like the idea of the front street just at the entrance of the Temple being passed by a corpse. Nor, if left to myself would I have taken it that way, if I had been present, tho' European corpses have been brought that way and sometimes Mohammedan too—besides the Pallan girl some 4 years ago.'[109] Officially, local

[105] House of Commons. *PP* (1860). [Sessional Paper No. 733, Vol. 52, No. 89.] East India (Disturbances in Tinnevelly), 2, 9 (para. 11), 24, 34 (para. 4) etc.
[106] Levinge to Pycroft (Tirunelveli, 24 Dec. 1858) (para. 1): ibid. 2.
[107] Levinge to Pycroft, 24 Dec. 1858: *PP* (1860), 2–3 (para. 2). Levinge to Pycroft, 31 Dec. 1858: ibid. 6–7 (paras. 7, 8). Judicial Letter from Fort St George, 3 May, No. 14 of 1859 (para. 4): ibid. 33–4. Levinge to Pycroft, 18 Feb. 1859, No. 69 (para. 7): ibid. 35–6.
[108] Dated 8 Feb. (No. 3); 3 May (No. 14) 1859; in Judicial Department, 28 July 1859 (No. 8): ibid. 37.
[109] Sargent to Royston, CMS Secretary in Madras, 6 Jan. 1859: CMS Archives.

Christians, led by the CMS, went to some lengths in trying to show, through press interviews and pamphlets, that anti-Christian feelings within the local population had not been the root cause of the trouble.[110] Rather, they placed blame upon caste prejudices and pollution rules, as well as upon deeply held feelings of social grievance among low-caste people against long-standing injustices.

In the long run, attempts by European and Hindu gentry to place the blame upon local Christians failed. The Government of Madras was then under the governorship of Sir Charles Trevelyan. Someone with experience in India dating back three decades, he took a broader perspective. Authorities hardly needed to be reminded by the Government of India that any event 'so serious and so likely to inflame the minds of Hindoos in other parts of India' could be extremely dangerous and destabilizing to the entire political system. What most concerned the Government of India was the possibility of spreading a contagion of 'dangerous misrepresentation' and excitement. It was mollified by local assurances that the 'excitement had subsided' and that the trouble had been altogether local, entirely confined to the 'Town of Tinnevelly'.[111] For that very reason, the question about whether the trouble had arisen 'solely because the deceased was a Christian' was raised. Just to suggest such a view might be to invite further troubles. Reports of continuing strife between non-Christians and between castes were just as frequent as trouble with low-caste Christians.[112] Also, some authorities became convinced that deliberate distortions in vernacular translations of the Queen's Proclamation lay at the root of these troubles.[113] Local people had been given the impression that the Queen was the Company's enemy and that she was angry over the allowing of missionaries into the country and over attempts to disturb and injure the land's religious institutions. It was her command and wish, after all, 'that no Hindus should become Christians' and that those who injured the old religion (*sanātana-dharma*) should be 'punished with death'.

In order to cool passions and restore order, a threefold policy was pursued. First, by blending a calm silence and calculated comment, public

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[110] 'The Tinnevelly Riots', Letter to the Editor: *SMT* (Madras: Friday, 14 Jan. 1859). 'The Tinnevelly Riots', reprinted, with additions, from the *Church Missionary Record* (Apr. 1859) 'Madras Native Association: Memorial to Lord Stanley', *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1 Sept. 1859), 193–206.

[111] Letter from G. F. Edmonstone, Secretary to the Government with the Governor-General, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St George, dated 16 Jan. 1859, No. 35; Fort St George Judicial Consultation, 8 Feb. 1859: *PP* (1860), 33.

[112] GOM Consultation, No. 40 of 28 Jan. 1859 (Order No. 122): ibid. 6–31 (paras. 1–38).

[113] Ibid. 32 (para. 40). 'The Riot at Tinnevelly', *Madras Times* (5 Jan. 1859), gave this some play, drawing opinions from the *Vizagapatam Chronicle*. *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (Sept. 1859), 196 (col. 2) elaborated on this theme, as did sources cited above (cf. n. 95).

attention was diverted from religious issues to other pressing matters. Sir Charles Trevelyan pointedly traced a long history of similar disturbances and tried to place what were called the 'Tirunelveli Troubles' into a wider context. Towns throughout the Presidency, as also throughout India, had long been well known to have similar disputes, either between different caste communities or between communities of the right and left hand. Such disputes had often occurred over the use of roads and streets, as well as over such conveyances as carriages, palanquins, elephants, and horses or over dignities, honours, loud music, or other assertive 'prehensions' that were assumed during processions. The time for tolerating such disputes and/or allowing 'public' exclusions was now over. Organized systems of intimidation were to end. Never again should they be permitted. When this policy was made public, the Acting Collector-Magistrate reported: 'The declaration of Government . . . has had an excellent effect. Towns and villages which were always in a chronic state of feud and disturbance, owing to the apprehensions of certain castes, have been quieted, and the question of the right to use the high streets and roads disposed of and submitted to.'[114]

Second, all rioters were to be prosecuted 'with utmost rigour'. Nor would attempts to have a court venue changed to Madras be any longer allowed. Despite arguments by a barrister named Branson, 'their Honours' the Justices of the High Court (Sadr Faujdari Adalat) publicly declared that they had 'no knowledge of proceedings pending' and that, even if they did, they would not comply with them. Not only did 'sufficient ground . . . for removing the proceedings from the local authorities' not exist but 'the authorities on the spot . . . [were] the proper parties to act in such a case'.[115] Third, attempts were made to show a wider compassion and sympathy for those who were fearful concerning what further changes might bring, especially about wider use of 'public' roads and other facilities that were to become available.

After the trials were over, thirty-seven persons had been convicted and sentenced for various crimes. But the government relented and showed mercy toward most rioters: 'The time [has] arrived when government might extend their clemency . . . without fear of their motives being misconstrued, or of encouragement being thereby afforded to the commission of such outrages in future.'[116] Trevelyan wrote: 'This belongs to a class of cases in

[114] GOM Consultation, No. 40 of 28 Jan. 1859, 31 (para. 38). Levinge to Pycroft, 18 Feb. 1859 (para. 7): ibid. 36.

[115] Clement Dale (Government Pleader) to Pycroft, 1 Feb. 1859 (No. 13); 5 Feb. (No. 16), in Judicial Consultation, 15 Feb.: ibid. 32–4. Difficulties detailed: 18 Feb. 1858: ibid. 35–6.

[116] Judicial Letter from Fort St George, 1 July, No. 25, of 1859 (para. 4): *PP* (1860), 38. Enclosed with Madras proceedings, from 25 June to 1 July 1859, detailing criminal proceedings and names of those sentenced.

which the exercise of clemency is often suitable and beneficial. The offen-
ders neither conspired against the state, nor intended by malice prepense any
injury against their fellow-citizens. It was a class quarrel, aggravated by
previous irritation, and not without a sense of right (however mistaken on
one part) on both sides. Enough has been done for the vindication of the
law, by the military execution upon about thirty persons concerned in the
riot, who were killed or wounded, by the dismissal of the tahsildar and
village moonsiff, and by the punishment which has already been inflicted by
judicial sentence, and the magistrate reports, that ''the town never was so
orderly and quiet as at present''.'[117] In due course, after the usual fine-
turning of bureaucratic wheels, approval of Her Majesty's Government in
support of this course of action was dispatched by Sir Charles Wood, the
Secretary of State for India. The bestowal of amnesty upon all in Tirunelveli
who were still confined, under sentence, or in default of bail took effect on
1 November 1859, 'the anniversary of Her Majesty's assumption of the
direct government of India'.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to show how the terms 'Hindu' and 'India' are linked.
Not only are they twins that came into existence with the formation of the
Government of India in 1773, but the systems that they represent were also
intermingled and overlapping from the beginning. It is hardly surprising that,
in our own day, 'Hindutva' as the ideology of a political religion ferociously
opposed to monotheistic traditions such as Christianity and Islam later found
institutional support, especially in Maharashtra and Gujarat, as also in north-
ern India. These concepts, together with institutions and ideologies related
to them that grew with the imperial system, did not reach full maturity and
reification until the late nineteenth century. But by the time this particular
kind of nationalist ideology took root among elite societies, in reaction
against modern, imperial, national, and secular institutions, those institutions
had already been developing, by means of various kinds of collaboration
mutual toleration, and cultural hybridity within Madras and Bengal, for a
much longer period. Even so, peoples within those areas, but especially
within greater Maharashtra, also reacted to any radical Christian movements
that reached into and upset existing social structures, especially those that
threatened to release from bondage peoples from ritually polluting castes that
had been held in perpetual thraldom for many centuries. Encounters of this
sort have been going on for at least two centuries. Nor are they about to end.

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[117] Ibid. 39. No. 33. Minute by the Honourable the President in Council (Fort St George,
dated 25 June 1859), and signed C. E. Trevelyan.

ELITE EDUCATION AND MISSIONARIES

By the early decades of the nineteenth century, the East India Company's sway over India looked firm. But more perceptive British observers remained acutely conscious of the fragility of British rule. They were so few and their culture so different from hosts of their subordinate officials upon whose loyalty and obedience they depended. The vast multitudes living in hundreds of thousands of villages, some ancient and some new-born, with each as distinct from the others in its castes and customs, reminded those Europeans who were perspicacious that the exercise of the Company's authority was all too ephemeral. Without warning, unforeseen, unpredictable, and unsettling incidents might erupt and the whole political system might then begin to unravel.

The security and stability of the whole Empire depended upon the loyalty of these hosts of Indian officials—roughly 200,000 to 300,000 Native Indian civil servants and, during times of war, comparable numbers of Native Indian infantry (sepoys), cavalry (*sawars*), and artillery. Without their keeping faith and 'being true to the salt' (*namak-hallāl*), the imperial structure could not survive. Some Europeans, wrote Sir Thomas Munro, were 'arrogant enough to suppose that we can, *with our limited numbers*, do the work of a nation'.[1] But that was the path to ruin. For barely a thousand Europeans to provide governance for a continent of a hundred million or more, over a segmented social order in each locality, where each elite had its own interests and values and where one could not appeal to a loyalty beyond family and caste and village, required more than simple collaboration. To build a single system of political authority and a common loyalty required special knowledge and understanding. Personal bonds, professional contracts, and patron–client obligations—being 'true-to-the- salt' (*namak-hallāl*)—could be extended only so far. A more permanent structure required a more comprehensive integration, more systematic acquisitions of information, and deeper understandings of the cultures of India. Most of all,

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[1] Alexander A. Arbuthnot (ed.), *Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras: Selections from his Minutes and Other Official Writings* (London, 1881), ii. 319.

a more comprehensive kind of ideological cement had to be found, stolen, or invented.

What became increasingly convoluted during the course of the nine-teenth century were three sets of interests: those of the middle- to upper-class, twice-born elites, especially Brahmans in urban centres such as Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay but also in urban centres in the Deccan and Indo-Gangetic plains; officials of the Presidency governments as well as of the Government of India, ostensibly under the eyes of authorities in London; and, finally, rapidly increasing numbers of missionaries, supported by various voluntary societies in Europe and America. In the end, while the elites remained largely united in their strong desires for higher and higher levels of modern education in English, both government and missionary bodies became deeply divided over the issue of whether the development of vernacular or English-medium schools was to be preferred. In the end, as we shall see, while a preponderance of missionaries in the *mufassal* districts put their primary emphasis upon basic literacy in the vernacular languages of each region, upper levels of education would be conveyed, almost exclusively, in English. Ironically, the very first institutions to provide advanced training in English were the three schools established and run in Thanjavur, Shivaganga, and Ramnad by the German missionary Christian Friedrich Schwartz. This kind of education not only served as a magnet for non-Christian elites, but also for smaller numbers of Christian elites. They also increasingly tended to divide missionaries along class lines, so that while some missionaries served lower-level institutions, a more select and exclusive few missionaries had the privilege of training those who would eventually become the rising new, largely Hindu, elites of national India. Thirty to forty years after the demise of Schwartz, most of these missionaries came to the Presidency cities of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras from the Free Church of Scotland.

'Oriental' Learning and Modern Education

The logic of exploiting local cultural intelligence, with its roots going back to 1639 and the founding of Madras, was lifted to a new level by the policies of Warren Hastings. As India's first Governor-General (1773–85), someone who had become fluent in Bengali, Persian, and Urdu during his rise to this high office, he clearly recognized that much more information and under-standing would be needed if the Indian Empire that was being constructed was to endure. As a product of the Enlightenment, he understood that more and more mysteries of nature and human life were being rapidly uncovered and explained than had ever before happened and that, in the face of ever new explanations, it was important to exercise one's reason with restraint,

sensitivity, and tolerance. To that end, he initiated a vast venture that in time would become known as 'Orientalism'.[2] Hosts of scholars, *both* European and Native, most of them nameless, became avidly engaged in uncovering, cataloguing, describing, surveying, preserving, and studying the corpus of an entire civilization. Among European scholars whom Hastings engaged in this venture were such stellar figures as Sir William Jones (1746–94), Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), Henry Colebrook (1765–1837), Nathaniel Halhed (1751–1830), John Holwell (1711–98), Colin Mackenzie (1753?–1821), David Brown (1763–1812), and scores of others. These would later be followed, in each Presidency, by scores of other European scholars, some of whom were officials such as Walter Elliot, William Erskine, Robert Sewell, or Horace Hayman Wilson, but many of whom were also missionaries, such as Robert Caldwell or George Uglow Pope. Behind almost all of this effort to discover 'India' were significant numbers of the twice-born (*dvija*) Indians—with patronage being extended to hundreds of dedicated *pandits* and *munshis*. Many of these were servants of the Company or their families, many of whom had themselves collaborated in the construction of the Indian Empire. As agents and brokers, go-betweens and interpreters (*dubashis*, *munshis*, and *vakils*) between European Company servants and princes of the land, as well as teachers and translators for each new generation of Europeans, their role was essential. Hastings well understood how pivotal their part was—Indian scholars, mostly Brahmans, over time would outnumber Europeans by roughly 100 to 1. Thus, one can never fail to appreciate that it was elite Indians themselves who made many if not most advances in Orientalist and Indological knowledge. These scholars symbolized hosts of nameless predecessors whose translations provided a vast corpus of intellectual and philosophical substance. Without such a colossal effort, much ancient lore might never have been excavated, and might have perished. What such collaboration produced would eventually culminate, over the course of the century that followed, in the prodigious compilations of Monier-Williams and Max Müller, such publications as the fifty-volume *Sacred Books of the East*. In fields of ancient history, philosophy, and religion, they unearthed a whole civilization—an almost lost 'wonder that was India'.[3] Indeed, in no continent on earth was there

[2] This vast, ongoing process of exploration and investigation is still ongoing. It can be compared, but on a much larger scale, with results of the Lewis and Clark expedition initiated by Thomas Jefferson. Both aimed to survey and describe a whole continent's natural as well as man-made resources and treasures.

[3] A. L. Basham's *The Wonder That Was India* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1954, 1956), pp. xxi, 568, captured this view, as did Max Müller's *The Sacred Books of the East*, a huge series of fifty volumes that began to emerge between 1879 and 1910, over a century after Warren Hastings had first launched such efforts. The most thorough recent treatment of this subject is Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane [Penguin Books], 2006).

such a prodigious series of parallel and ongoing investigations—attempts to collect, describe, measure, catalogue everything about India's past and present.[4] As this by-product of European Enlightenment gained recognition and respectability, chairs of 'Indology' and Sanskrit became established in Europe, America, and around the world.

But, even so, except in matters of 'Hindu Law' and 'Mohammedan Law', it took many years before a large enough pool of information and intelligence could be collected, so as to enable its practical application to rulership. In the meantime, any ignorant measure could, inadvertently, disturb entrenched interests, deep prejudices, and religious feelings. Any casual slip or thoughtless gesture might do more damage than could be repaired in years, leaving a miasma of lingering mistrust and resentments. Spasmodic outbursts of violence or disclosures of stealthy subversion kept surfacing every year in one corner of the continent or the other—in localities stretching from Kaniya Kumari to Kashmir and from the Brahmaputra Gorge to the Khyber. Such events could shake the complacency of rulers, confirming their prejudices and fears. Fears fed upon what was dark and mysterious. In each division (*taluk*) and district (*zillah*), strange, even bizarre, things that looked 'barbarous' or 'uncivilized' could challenge the uninformed among new rulers. News of Mappilah 'outrages', Khond 'human sacrifices' (*meriahs*), networks of brigands and banditry (*thugs* or *phansigars*), plunderings of travellers or burnings of villages by *dacoits* or *pindaris*, compounded by messages about rebellions, ritual suicides, infanticides, and witchcraft, flowed into secretariats. These were translated into English by clerks (once known as *dubashis*—'two-language' brokers) who, in their thousands, served the sahibs who sat in high places, either in each district office (*kachcheri*) or in the Presidency whither such things were forwarded.

  The fundamental problem of inadequate information, along with inner contradictions between social plurality and imperial necessity, exacted a toll during the early decades of the nineteenth century. As 'instances of extensive embezzlements, repeated malversations, and fraudulent combinations against common authority' came to light in every district and branch of government, Munro observed, 'It is surely a degrading spectacle to contemplate a great and civilized people fallen under a foreign dominion, with the first among them not only excluded from all power, but reduced in salary, even in the highest offices which they can hold, nearly to the level of domestic servants.'[5] How could 'any body of public men similarly situated

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[4] This resulted in an enormous number of surveys: e.g. the Archaeological Survey of India, the Manuscript Survey of India, the Geographic Survey of India, the Cartographic Survey of India, the Epigraphic Survey of India, the Numismatic Survey of India, the Linguistic Survey of India, the Anthropological Survey.

[5] 'Allowances to Servants in Taluk and District Offices', *Selections from the Old Records of Bellary District* (10 Apr. 1806).

in any country on the face of the earth' exposed to such temptations and 'so little inducement to honesty' remain faithful? Small wonder it was almost impossible to prevent or remedy 'corruption'. No device of imagination seemed capable of healing a malady of conflicting values between social elites and rulers, Europeans and Indians.

Clearly, something had to be done to improve mutual understanding, mutual appreciation, and mutual respect. This could not be done without massive efforts to remove mutual ignorance, based on lack of accurate information. In a report a decade later, in 1815, a Board of Inquiry concluded:

We are far from believing that the artful intrigues, corrupt compacts, daring embezzlements, hardy frauds, and shameless perjuries of . . . officers which have of late so much disgraced this department . . . can be traced to any depravity inseparable from the character of the Hindoos. We think they are to be attributed to very different causes: to the want of almost any inducement to resist the temptations to which they are exposed, to their *defective education*. (italics added)[6]

With so few European officers and so much discretion left to vast numbers of Indian officers, with such strong allures and such defective means of detection, it was no wonder that the imperial structures seemed fragile. Most officials of earlier generations had seen 'nothing disgraceful in the pursuit of illicit gains except want of adroitness or success'. There could be little doubt, given their meagre pay, but that additional 'perquisites of office [had been] justified by necessity'.

Concerns about such inner 'corrosion' had brought rigorous reforms, at least of the European establishment. The first solution lay in providing more incentives—for both European and Indian officials. To that end, first Lord Cornwallis and then Wellesley had taken steps to transform the Covenanted Civil Service, but doing so mainly for European officials. The old days of high-level venality and 'pagoda tree shaking' had all but vanished. Promotion based on merit and training had replaced patronage. High pay and pensions had put most European officials beyond temptation. Fear of personal disgrace, dishonour, exposure, and shame had also become more effective. Sir Thomas Munro and his younger protégé, Mounstuart Elphinstone, lamented that the same incentives had not also been extended to Indian officials. Together they would lay the foundations of government within the vast Madras and Bombay Presidencies.

The second solution lay in improved education. For European cadets, both civil and military, such measures were begun with provisions of formal

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[6] Board of Revenue to Government of Madras, 11 Dec. 1815, para. 7 (Madras Public Consultations, 22 Apr. 1816), in Tamil Nadu Archives (TNA).

instruction and indoctrination at Haileybury College and Addiscombe College—one for civilian and the other for military officers—in England. This was reinforced by the granting of awards, prizes, and distinctions which generated a common ethos, élan, and elitist *esprit de corps*. But if the prestige of one 'steel frame', by appealing to achievement in merit and honour, could be so successful with Europeans, some argued, surely another 'steel frame' incorporating elite Indian officers, especially from families of the most respectable Brahmans and other notables in each locality, could do the same and assure the loyalty of local elites in India. The key to achieving this kind of high vision, in the minds of more enlightened rulers, had long been appreciated both in Parliament and in the Company's Court of Directors. It was certainly well understood among their most astute officials in India. For Munro and Elphinstone and, a generation later, for those who surrounded Bentinck and Trevelyan, the key was education. Education promised to produce more than all other remedies (pay, pensions, dignities, and honours) combined. Education would integrate diverse elements of the Indian social structure and forge common bonds of loyalty, whose values meshed with visions of a greater India.

Among the clearest manifestations of the growing emphasis upon education as a remedy for many maladies and troubles within the imperial system, expressions were embedded in policy statements of the Company's Court of Directors and in Parliament. In 1793, within the East India Company's Charter Renewal Act that came before the House of Commons for its vote, an action that was required every twenty years, a vision was included stipulating that, henceforth, steps should be taken to advance practical knowledge among all peoples of India under the Company's rule. Similar motions, each more expansive and more strongly worded than its predecessor, were to be entered into the Charter Renewal Acts of 1813 and 1833.

Even as such actions were being taken in London, initial steps were taken to establish government-supported colleges in India. Almost all of these earliest efforts, initially, were integral to the building and enhancing of 'Orientalist' understandings and the gathering of information. Previously, aside from chaplain schools, infant schools, and orphan asylums within each presidency, no official efforts to establish Company-supported state schools had been made. Then, in 1781, Warren Hasting founded a Madrassa, or 'Mohammedan College', in Calcutta, for the benefit of respectable Muslim gentry and their descendants. His purpose was to deepen, expand, and extend 'Oriental' learning so that both European officers and Native gentry could more efficiently carry out administrative responsibilities under the new Raj. In 1792, Jonathan Duncan, the Political Resident at Varanasi (aka Benares), opened a Sanskrit College for the cultivation of literature, laws,

and religion in that city. A decade or more later, fledgling colleges were also established in Delhi and Agra. Other institutions were eventually to be started in Lucknow, Bareilly, and other places in the north.

But perhaps the single most ambitious action was that taken by Lord Richard Wellesley, the Governor-General of India, in 1801. His purpose in founding the College of Fort William was nothing less, in the views of some, than to create a 'University of the East' (or 'Oxford of the East'). But, by not consulting more closely with the Company's Court of Directors, his plan failed to fully live up to such expectations. As it was, perhaps to placate Charles Grant, one of the Evangelical 'saints' among the Company's directors, several initial appointments in the college went to staunch supporters of Christian missions. With David Brown as Provost, Claudius Buchanan as Vice-Provost, and William Carey as Professor of Oriental Languages, Evangelical influence within the College was hardly inconsiderable. Within the parallel College of Fort St George established in Madras, 'Orientalism' was to remain much more 'secular', or 'Hindu', in orientation.

Yet, Indian elites remained dissatisfied. Only slowly and much later, as they consulted with their own Indian subordinates, such as Kayastha officials in the north and Maratha Brahman, or Desastha, officials in the south, did the most perceptive European officials come to fully realize that, just as much as Hastings and European Orientalists had wanted to uncover as much information about India as possible, and required Sanskrit, Persian, and other languages for such purposes, so also there was a rising new generation of ambitious, aspiring, and curious young Indians who were increasingly, with each new decade, demanding opportunities to acquire modern learning from the West, and who desired a command of English for that purpose.

Indigenous Demands for Modern Education in English

Thus, the discovery of India, whether by and for Indians themselves or by and for Europeans, was only half the story. Discovery of the world beyond India, especially in the West, was the other half. Just as Indians had played such a crucial part in bringing the British to power and just as it was up to some Britons to play no less crucial a role in helping elites in India to gain a consciousness of their common 'Indianness'—of their mutual bonds beyond parochial ethnicity as 'Indians'—so now it was various Native Indian elites themselves, especially Brahmans of the south and Kayasthas of the north, who undertook quests to discover anything and everything they could about their new rulers, and the cultures of Europe from whence these new rulers had sprung. Just as initial Company contacts had been with commercial classes and subsequent interactions had enabled enlistment of

military classes for the conquest of India, now something far more profound and lasting was called for. This was the subtle but powerful force of ideas— ideas that influenced ways of thinking and living and, eventually, of revolutionizing a culture. The Raj, in other words, gave more than political unity to the subcontinent. At every stage, groups of openly sympathetic Britons and Indians interacted with each other in such ways as to encourage rising new generations in India to find their own place in the modern world.

A half-century after the Raj had gained paramount ascendancy, a Desastha informed James Dykes, the Collector-Magistrate of Salem: 'It is perhaps the wonder of the world, this Indian Empire. Whilst the native soldiery give their heart's blood on the battlefield . . . that same devotion to a strange race sitting in the seat of the rulers is shown by men of the priesthood, the hierarchy of Hindostan. And secular members of that body which had ruled the destinies of the country since the days of Menu, no matter who held the sword, whether Mussulman, Mogul, Hindoo, or Mahratta, have from [the *Kompanee Bahadur*'s] first assumption of power ever striven their utmost to fill the coffers of that State . . . A Brahmin never considers himself of any nation; he is "twice-born" and by virtue of this . . . is bound by no such ties. If asked what countryman he is, the reply invariably will be . . . that in his family such a language is used. He and his fathers . . . have had nothing to do with one nation more than another. And whoever may rule India, he fully believes that all financial affairs will be administered, as heretofore . . . through those "twice-born" that speak the Mahratta language.'[7]

For elites in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, the contagious and powerful influence of new ideas came with each fresh boat from Europe. The deeper one probed into these ideas, the more exciting they became. These ideas were of such quality, so sweeping and so disturbing in their implications, that they fascinated those who read them. New kinds of abstract thinking, new scientific theories, new laboratory discoveries, new methods of acquiring knowledge, new mechanical inventions, and new technologies caught imaginations. Perhaps most radical of all were ideas that assumed the possibilities of never-ending progress. Ideas of new rights for all humankind were no less disturbing. The whole scientific outlook that had been transported to India, first by the Jesuits and then by the Pietists of Tranquebar, began to attract attention as never before. In the wake of revolutions and wars in Europe, new values concerning what was 'human' stressed the essential equality and dignity of each individual person, the value of 'liberalizing' social reforms, and the importance of self-government. By as early as 1835, if not earlier, there were always some high officials who thought that

[7] J. B. W. Dykes, *Salem, an Indian Collectorate* (Madras, 1853), 323–4.

Britain should not rule India permanently. When such individuals as Charles Trevelyan, Secretary to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, declared that it was the bounden duty and desire of all right-thinking governments in India to help the peoples of India to regain their independence, elites in these cities took notice. 'If this can be peacefully accomplished,' he wrote, 'we shall exchange profitable subjects for still more profitable allies.' As each ship anchored at Calcutta and released its cargo of new ideas, it also brought explosive forces of possible change. Many of these ideas were but shock waves from the latest changes of what was happening to society in Britain. Even so, while Persian modes and tastes had charmed, even fascinated them, it was now the turn of European ideas to transform, modernize, even revolutionize. These were ideas that did not need to be forced upon anyone. These were ideas that some elites in India wanted.

If few of the former rulers agreed to work with the new rulers or indeed to have anything to do with them, many who had helped to bring the Raj into being had altogether different attitudes. While some former rulers, in their princely states, tried to reform their own institutions—whether to purify Islam or improve themselves—many former rulers also simply sank into despair. They mourned the loss of their power and sighed for the old days of authority and glory. But those who had already helped the Company to gain power, especially even Brahmans or Kayasthas who had long known what it was like to work under rulers who did not share their own way of life, were not dismayed. Such persons as these did not hesitate to look for new opportunities or take positions under the British. In fact, just as they had formerly mastered Persian, so now they eagerly took to English. Good knowledge of English became the key to a bright future. Just as caste skills had always been secretly passed on from father to son, so now families also kept their knowledge of English as secret as possible so that their children might gain extra benefits from such knowledge. Thus, while some elites, especially Muslims and more reactionary Brahmans, remained aloof, others studied the British and their European ideas with open curiosity and close attention—with minds open to new ways of thinking and living.

Thus, long before the more enlightened government policy-makers began to muddle their way toward a coherent programme of state support for making modern education in English available, Native elites, gentry, and officials in government service had already decided that, in one way or another, they would acquire such knowledge for themselves. As early as the 1780s, elite communities in the presidencies who had acquired a knowledge of English, such as Maratha Brahmans in the south and Kayasthas in the north, were beginning to gain positions of importance within the Company's service. As previously mentioned, some sent their sons and

nephews to the three schools established by Christian Friedrich Schwartz in Thanjavur, Shivaganga, and Ramnad. Students emerging from the schools belonging to the maharajas of those three kingdoms attained such positions of importance that these schools continued to receive regular support, on orders from the Company's directors in London.[8] As a consequence, Colin Mackenzie, Thomas Munro, and many other British officers had already surrounded themselves with staffs of these extremely gifted and well-educated, English-speaking members of Maratha Brahman diaspora— also known as Desastha Brahmans, as distinct from Chitpavans or Konka- nestha. Maratha Brahmans of the north, who seem to have been conservative when it came to personal piety, philosophy, and ritual purity, stayed closer to their ancestral homeland near Pune.

The careers of many such individuals serve to exemplify and typify demands for English language and modern education that became stronger and stronger by the end of the eighteenth century. Two such Desastha who held prominent positions in the top cadres were Vennelacunty Soob Row and Parthaput Raghaviah Acharya. Both gained their fluency in English long before any formal schools and colleges had become available. Both acquired such knowledge of English and modern science by picking it up in the old- fashioned way—as 'sacred-and-secret' knowledge handed down from father (or uncle) to son (or nephew), and from *guru* to *sishiya* or acquired by apprenticing in a government office (*kachcheri*). Both gained government positions of some responsibility under the Company. Raghaviah, a 'Telugu Desastha' of Madras about whom there is little information, cultivated an informal familiarity with high-level Company officials, such as William Kirkpatrick, Colin Mackenzie, Thomas Strange, and Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington), concerning his fascination with Western sci- ences.[9] His views on inadequate understandings of 'Hindoo' antiquity, astrology, and traditions taken from puranic sources being conveyed at Fort William College in Calcutta were published in the *Monthly Review* for February 1804.[10] In a letter to Kirkpatrick, he complained that, instead of squandering resources, the Company ought to 'encourage the natives to acquire a proficiency in English language and literature'.[11] Beyond such meagre remnants of his frankly expressed ideas, all that remains of his work

[8] 'Fisher's Memoir', in A. N. Basu (ed.), *Indian Education in Parliamentary Papers* (Bombay, 1952), pt. I (1832): 1–61; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *PP*), 1831–2, IX (735–1), 412.
[9] I am grateful to Professor Richard Fox Young for introducing me to Raghaviah, allowing me to cite his not yet published article 'Empire and Misinformation: Christianity *and* Colonial Knowledge from a South Indian Hindu Perspective (ca. 1804)'.
[10] *Monthly Review*, 43 (Feb. 1804), 190–7.
[11] Kirkpatrick to Raghaviah, n.d. (*c.*1806, in Kirkpatrick Papers: MSS. Eur. F. 228/20 (BL: OIOC).

is a manuscript in which he attempted to reconcile Indian and European astronomy.[12]

Education in the city of Madras could not have progressed as it did without the Madras School Book Society. This remarkable voluntary organization, formed in 1820 with active encouragement from the new Governor, Sir Thomas Munro, consisted of prominent notables and officials, both European and Indian. Its secretary was Vennelacunty Soob Row, a Desastha Brahman who, after a long career in Company service, had risen to the position of Head Marathi Translator of the Sadr Adalat (aka later High Court). As an insider, Row was determined to do all in his power to see that a modern educational system was established, with English as its primary language. In his reports, he spelled out, in detail, how sons of elite families were already being trained for careers in the civil service and how rapidly demands for advanced scientific and technical education had been growing. The desire among elite groups of society for instruction in English had become so strong that any huckster, however fraudulent, could pretend to set up a so-called 'English school'. He had counted nearly 500 signboards advertising such 'schools' along Mount Road alone, each claiming to offer 'best teaching' in the English language. The glut of such institutions had driven down fees and driven up demands for protection from con artists. Yet, for all their pretensions, few so-called 'English academies' could hope to compete with the traditional systems of sacred-and-secret hereditary learning which, when combined with patronage and family influence, still enabled most well-situated Brahman youths to find employment in offices of the Company's governments.[13]

Row's own career served as a classic study of how knowledge of English could be acquired. Born in Ongole in 1784, of a Maratha Brahman (Desastha) family of modest means that had long held village lands (as *mirasidars*) and had long occupied government positions, his schooling had begun at the age of 5. At the age of 10, after his father's death and after his own sacred thread ceremony (*upanayana*), he had followed his cousin to Masulipatam. There another cousin who worked as 'Gomashta in the Sarishtah Department of the Huzur Cut cherry'—namely Accountant in the Secretariat of the district's Head Office—had taught him how to copy out Arabic accounts and Roman letters in a fine 'copperplate' hand. An uncle in Vinukonda, 'Manager of the Postmaster's Office', had then tutored him personally. A second stint in the Masulipatam Collectorate Office

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[12] C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication, 1770–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 213, 261.

[13] *The Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row (Native of Ongole), Translator of the Late Sudr Court, Madras, from 1815 to 1829 (As Written by Himself)*, ed.V. Venkata Copal Row (Madras, 1873), 67–8 (hereafter *Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row*), 64–73.

(*Kachcheri*) had enabled Row to study English with a Brahman named 'Bydepauty Venkatachellu'. This experience had then qualified him to work as a volunteer, copying out documents in English script under the careful gaze of 'Navaloor Pareatomby Pillah', Head Accountant in the Vinukonda Military Paymaster's Office. By 1799 Row was ready for proper paid employment. This had begun, on 'one Madras pagoda per mensem', in service to Henry Wilson at Guntur. Slowly, as proficiency had improved—in understanding, speaking, and writing English—more work had been thrown onto the grass mat on which he sat and that served as his desk. In due time, during these years, a distant uncle had found him a Desastha bride, who was daughter to the Chief Secretary (*Huzur Sheristadar*) in the District Collectorate of Madurai. In the meantime, through conversations and discussions with European contacts and friends, from whom he had acquired or borrowed classic works of literature, his fluency in conversation and writing had improved. Sixteen years later, after working for *Kompanee Bahadur* in many districts, he had been promoted to Head Translator to the Sadr Adalat (High Court) with a monthly pay of ninety-five *pagodas* (small gold coins, also known as *hūn*, that bore the stamp of Sri Venkateshwara in Tirupati). By then, he had gained many patrons, both European and Indian. A decade later in 1828, not long after the Governor's untimely cholera death in Cuddapah, he abruptly retired. As succeeding governments dithered, his hopes for a modern system of education in English gradually faded. He decided to devote his last years to making provisions for his descendants, in obtaining patronage for young relatives, and in making religious endowments for the performance of special ceremonies (*pujas*) at pilgrim shrines (*tirthas*) and guest houses or roadside groves for pilgrims (*shrotriams*, and *topes*) for pilgrims.

In colourful detail, Row left a memoir covering details of his life to his descendants—a rare glimpse of life on the cusp of rapid change in the construction of modern India such as can be found nowhere else. This makes clear that apprenticeships were not possible without proper connections and proper skills in English. Most wealthier families employed English tutors while poorer relations went to various kinds and qualities of 'schools', either in Madras or in country towns, where knowledge of English was advertised. Some families even left special legacies for educational endowments for their descendants. By means of such 'sacred-and-secret' family lore, which was combined with carefully preserved English-language materials, such as dictionaries and dialogues, spellers, vocabularies, readers, and literary works—e.g. sets of Milton or Shakespeare—elite families thrived. Row himself exulted in his ability to borrow and lend books or to discuss and compare epic works with European friends. In his day formal study of English grammar was not readily available in most places. Nevertheless, he

took great pride in knowing how to help a boy learn English and how he could 'obtain a small situation by the interest of his relations'.[14] Those who, like himself, wanted to preserve and enhance their monopoly in English finally organized themselves into what they called the Madras Literary Society and this, in due course, became affiliated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Many other members of various regional elites were extremely influential in pressing the government to support a system of modern education in English. Among names that might be mentioned of persons who, having attained their own mastery of English by traditional forms of tutoring, had a wider influence, no single person of the period was more remarkable than Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1771–1833). He, as we shall see, clearly established the fact that there was a strong demand for modern education in English, including the latest developments in science and philosophy from Europe and America, doing so long before demands for modern education of such elites were being recognized. Born circa 1771 into a prominent Bengali Brahman family, proud of three generations of service under Mughal rulers, he already was fluent in Arabic and Persian, as well as the Bengali and Sanskrit that was mandatory within his community. Acquisition of a perfect command of English enabled him to keep in close touch with friends in Europe and America, such as Emerson and Mazzini. Extensive landholdings brought him an annual income of 11,000 rupees so that, together with his country houses and a town house in Calcutta, he never needed to work for a living. Yet, such was his interest in 'public affairs' that he drifted in and out of government service for more than twelve years. In 1815, he joined a group of modern Bengali gentlemen (*bhadralok*) in Calcutta dedicated to reforming and revitalizing Bengali culture. He wanted to combine what was best in India's past with what was best from the West. In collaboration with Unitarians and other prominent members of the Bengali gentry (*bhadralok*), he helped to found one of India's first truly modern schools,[15] the Hindu College of Calcutta in 1816, the Calcutta School Book Society in 1817, the Calcutta School Society in 1818, and, finally, the Brahmo Samaj in 1828 (an event which signalled his final split with Unitarians in Bengal).[16] He urged the government to bring more Europeans to India who could teach the latest principles of mathematics, philosophy, and the sciences. He

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[14] *Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row*. For corroborative detail, see 'Company Reliance on Hereditary Service: Evidence of Alexander Duncan Campbell', *PP* (General Sessions, HC, 1831–2), 174; and J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners and Customs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 288–95.

[15] Over thirty years after Schwartz had founded such schools in Thanjavur, Shivaganga, and Ramnad.

[16] Spencer Lavan, *Unitarians and India: A Study in Encounter and Response* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977).

encouraged his friends, such as Debendranath Tagore, to transfer modern industrial technology to India and to invest in such ventures as banking, mining, manufacturing, and shipping. He upheld freedom of speech and freedom of the press; he fought against superstitions, caste inequities, polytheism, idol worship, and inhuman practices, such as *sati* and child marriage; and he argued with Christian missionaries over contradictions in what they preached, studying Greek and Hebrew in order to show them how they had misinterpreted their own Scripture.[17] In 1820, Ram Mohan Roy, at his own expense, published a compilation of the ethical teachings of Christ taken from the New Testament, which he entitled *The Precepts of Jesus: A Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Stunned and deeply hurt at the fury of public response published by his Serampore friends through the contentious and less than kind pen of Joshua Marshman who put himself in the posture of 'champion of the truth', Ram Mohan responded by trying to defend his previous work in three *Appeals to the Christian Public*. Marshman's 1822 London publication, *A Defense of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ in Reply to Rammohan Roy*, not only made Roy into a controversial figure, but did as much to spread knowledge of the Gospel as had happened in the thirty years since William Carey's first arrival in Bengal. Yet, at the same time, the aggressive tone taken by missionaries did much to alienate those they wanted to reach. Finally, in founding a 'Hindu reform society' that he called the 'Brahmo Samaj' it was Ram Mohan's hope that, by such means, the best elements of every form of religious life, of both East and West, could be combined. As the leading light of the Bengal Renaissance, his many publications brought him both controversy and fame, so much so that ever after he was to be extolled as the 'Father of Modern India'. In sum, Ram Mohan Roy occupied a transitional position, straddling the Orientalist–Anglicist divide and the divide between old ways of acquiring English through *guru-sishiya* apprenticeships and new ways of studying and advancing knowledge by means of modern schools.[18]

Early Official Efforts to Spread Education

Development of educational systems by the government proved to be anything but easy. In the first place, such advanced thinking was ahead of its time, certainly in Britain. Few governments, with the possible exception of early Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia in America, or perhaps

[17] Bruce Carlisle Robertson, *Raja Rammohan Ray: The Father of Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 39–51.

[18] Robertson, *Raya Rammohan Ray*, 43–4. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773–1835* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

Napoleonic France and Prussia, had developed such institutions prior to the nineteenth century. Rather, such matters were left to local parish churches or to the patronage of wealthy philanthropists. In India, modern education had begun with missionary schools as Evangelicals, attempted to provide literacy in the vernacular 'mother tongue' for each community. Thus, it is hardly strange that when suggestions were made by officers in India to directors of what had until recently been a trading company in London, a firm whose instincts had always inclined them towards frugality and parsimony so as to maximize dividends, dithering on decisions became a form of institutionalized delay.

Parallel investigations and consultations on the subject of education, albeit often dithering, halting, and spasmodic, took place in all three presidencies of British India during the 1820s and 1830s.

In each, a School Textbook Society and then a Committee of Public Instruction was established, to be later followed by a somewhat antagonistic Council of Education. While much is already known about how such efforts took place in Bengal,[19] it may perhaps be more instructive to see how such developments took place in one or the other of the sister Presidencies of Madras and Bombay, where the towering figures of Munro and Elphinstone would overshadow others, at least during the 1820s, when they were the imperial proconsuls of these two vast satrapies. For our purposes, we shall concentrate on Madras.

But, even before these institutions were formed, there were some who seriously addressed the issue of education. The pioneer in the south was Alexander Ross, district officer in charge of Cuddapah. Alarmed at the 'extensive embezzlements and fraudulent combinations' and aware of pleas for a 'means best calculated to excite Natives in a faithful discharge of their public duties, by hope of reward rather than by dread of punishment', he described the indigenous system: 'When the education which a young Native receives . . . comes to be considered, it can hardly be wondered at that he should turn out so ill. He is at an early age taught to read in one or two or three languages and to keep accounts. This is accomplished by the time he is thirteen or fourteen years old, after which he is considered as a burden on his family, and is turned out to advance himself in the best way he can. His grand object is to get himself a patron and a situation; and when he has accomplished the latter, he only tries to make the best of it; and from want of proper principles, he is not delicate in his choice of the means of doing so.'[20] Arguing that government should 'take upon itself the education

[19] Michael Andrew Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal, 1793–1837* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
[20] Board of Revenue (BOR) to Government of Madras (GOM), 11 Dec. 1815 (para. 9), in Madras Revenue Consultations (MRC) of 22 Apr. 1816; *PP*, 1831, IX (735–1). 412.

of its Native servants', Ross submitted a proposal 'for the proper education and moral instruction of young men, particularly though by no means exclusively for Brahmins [ages 12 to 20]'. A school in each district turning out fifty to sixty students each year would 'go farther towards securing a faithful set of public servants than any code of laws or penal regulations on the face of the earth'.[21]

Responses to Ross's plan were hardly wholehearted. Politely praised, his plan was shunted to the College of Fort St George.[22] Allowed to try his experiment, his spending was curtailed and he was cautioned against undue efforts lest they fail. The Court of Directors in London, meanwhile, took notice of the merits of the Ross plan. In their dispatch of 22 May 1818, they wrote: 'The establishment of seminaries for the education of the Natives, particularly Brahmins, as public servants, with a view to improving their moral principles and attaching them to Government, is a measure . . . well worthy of trial on a limited scale.'[23] Unfortunately, Ross's premature death from cholera temporarily stalled the matter.

Munro, Governor of Madras from 1820 to 1827, soon took up the challenge. Noting that literacy was confined to Brahmans, merchants, and village lords, and that women were almost totally excluded, feeling that 'people should be left to manage their schools in their own way', and wanting to dispel what he saw as an appalling prevalence of contradictory and ignorant opinions, 'mere conjectures . . . unsupported by documents',[24] he ordered a survey. What he wanted was a complete listing of schools in each district, exact number of scholars and teachers, with castes to which they belonged, years of schooling, and books used in special 'colleges' for astrology-astronomy, medicine, and law, together with sources of funding, whether from religious endowments or from tuition. Results of the survey revealed a total of 12,498 schools and 188,000 pupils within a population of 12,850,941—or one school per thousand persons and one student out of every sixty-seven persons. Since half this population were males and only one-ninth of these, or 713,000, were between the ages of 5 and 10, only one out of four males attended any kind of school. An uneven distribution of classes and castes between urban and rural families, between those schooled

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[21] MRC, 22 Apr. 1816.

[22] *PP*, 1831, IX (735–1). 412. Vellore District Records, 3106: 129–35 (5 Oct. 1816); Tinnevelly District Records, 3593: 117–19 (21 May 1816); Masulipatam District Records, 2963: 161–79 (17 Apr. 1816).

[23] K. N. V. Sastri, *The Munro System of Statesmanship in India* (Mysore: University of Mysore Press, 1939), 278–89, contains full text of dispatch. Cf. BOR to GOM (11 Dec. 1815), para. 93; MRC (22 Apr. 1816).

[24] 'Minute on the Education of the Natives of India' (25 June 1825), in MRC (2 July 1822). Also see Arbuthnot, *Selections*, ii. 328–9; and Basu (ed.), *Indian Education in Parliamentary Papers*, i. 176–7.

or not schooled at home, reduced those being taught to one caste person in three. Madras had 29,983 males under instruction, with five being taught at home for every one not taught there.[25]

Analysis of such data reveals further variables. First, a comparison shows that there were many more schools in Tamil than in Telugu districts. In each Telugu district, Brahmans comprised 60 to 75 per cent of all pupils, far outnumbering pupils from 'Clean Shudra' (Sat-Sudra) or non-Brahman peoples—namely such mercantile peoples as Balijas, Chettis, or Komartis and such agrarian warrior lords of the villages as Velamas, Kammas, Reddis, and Rajus. In Telugu country 'one invariably found that village schoolmasters were Bramins'. Thus, strong as Ayyar and Ayyengar Brahmans might be in the extreme south, they enjoyed nothing like the monopoly over literacy and learning that Niyogi and Vaidiki Brahmans north of them enjoyed.[26] In Tamil country, Vellalar teachers predominated. Many Tamil schools not only preserved the literary and inscriptional remains of an older non-Brahman (if not pre-Brahman or non-*Sanskriti*) heritage but this elite was also still manifestly vital and creative.[27] Most Telugu elites, on the other hand, remained largely excluded from access to literary works and were confined to reciting the oral epics of their hereditary bards.[28]

The same survey showed a virtually total exclusion of 'unclean' or 'untouchable' (*achuta* or *āvarna*) communities, as well as women, from education. The word 'pariah' was invariably absent from survey reports. Noting that 'mixed and impure castes seldom learn to read', the survey included 'Mussulman scholars' and 'All other castes'. Also missing was any mention of 'Kshatriya' castes. One must remember that, after all, Desastha Brahmans close to Munro worked hard, and, in all probability, made up the forms and conducted the actual survey. Brahmans and Vaishiyas who in aggregate were considerably less than 10 per cent of the population made up an average of 34.5 per cent of all pupils in village schools. Considering 'sacred-and-secret' rituals and schooling in homes of the high-born in

[25] Alexander A. Arbuthnot, *Papers Relating to Instruction in the Madras Presidency* (Madras: Government Press, 1855), appendix C, 'Educational Census of 1825'.

[26] Dubois, *Hindu Manners and Customs*, 292. Apparently originally plagiarized from a much earlier work by a Jesuit missionary, Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux.

[27] George L. Hart III, 'Ancient Tamil Literature: Its Scholarly Past and Future', in Burton Stein (ed.), *Essays on South India* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1975), 41–63. Hints of a non-Brahman heritage in Tamil schools are found in works by Roberto de Nobili, C. Giuseppe Beschi, and early Tranquebar scholars. For a fuller analysis, see Dennis Hudson, 'The Life and Times of H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827–1900)' (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1970), 18, 24–41. Also see John J. Paul and Robert E. Frykenberg, 'A Research Note on the Discovery of Writings by Savariraya Pillai, a Tamil Diarist of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Tinnevelly', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 44: 3 (1985), 521–8.

[28] Gene H. Roghair, *The Epic of Palnadu: A Study and Translation of Palnati Virula Katha, a Telugu Oral Tradition from Andhra Pradesh, India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

contrast to ordinary village schooling, one can well imagine how strong were pressures of selective exclusion. Token fees or propitiatory offerings of three annas a month, in cash or in kind, was far more than most families could afford. In other words, people of Paraiyar, Pallar, Chakkilliyar, Mala, Madiga origin, or any other servile community, who made up half of the population, were not counted.[29] Exclusive elite status, reflecting strata of ritual purity, pervaded all schooling. Even 'caste' (or 'clean' *varna*) boys were physically separated, with non-Brahmans and Brahmans sitting apart from each other, often in different rooms. Subjects studied, materials handled, and books assigned reflected the same segmentation. It was normal for all pupils to memorize great epics (*kathās*)—whether *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, or '*Bhagrata*'. 'Manufacturing castes', according to A. D. Campbell, studied books 'peculiar to their own religious tenets'; and 'those who [wore] the lingam [a people called Lingayats] studied texts that they considered sacred', together with forms of 'agricultural accounting' and daily recitations in unison of memorized basic knowledge—such as 'the sixty names of the years, the days of the week, the planets, the stars, the months, the important festivals and remarkable days'—that could be performed by all. From the *Amarakosha*, Sanskrit Dictionary of Synonyms, students also learned 'names of the deities, the quarters, the . . . musical instruments, the divisions of the earth, the towns, the plants, and the animals'.[30]

Undismayed by the results of his survey, the Governor concluded, 'The state of education, low as it is compared with that of our own country, is higher than it was in most European countries at a not very distant period.'[31] Munro's sweeping scheme of 1826, clearly reflecting ideas received from survey reports he had requested, revealed a radical shift from his thinking in 1822. It was perhaps the most comprehensive plan for government involvement in education yet proposed for India, the likes of which would not be seen again for another century. What he advocated was nothing less than the building of a state-supported educational system for the whole country, from remote villages to central cities. 'Better instructed teachers' would be the pivot on which all else turned: 'What is wanted is a school for educating teachers, as proposed by the Madras School Book Society in their letter of the 25th October 1824.' Each district would need two main schools, one for Hindus and one for Muslims; and each *taluk* would need *tahsildari* schools

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[29] Arbuthnot, *Papers Relating to Instruction*, 45; and A. D. Campbell to BOR (17 Aug. 1825), para. 18; in MRC (25 Aug. 1823).

[30] A. D. Campbell, 'On the State of Education of the Natives of South India', *Madras Journal of Literature and Science (MJLS)* (Oct. 1834), 350–9.

[31] Minute on Education (10 Mar. 1825), in Arbuthnot, *Selections*, ii. 328–9; and Arbuthnot, *Paper Relating to Instruction*.

with proper teachers as soon as these could be made available. In sum, he proposed 'forty Collectorate and three hundred Tahsildari schools'.[32]

Yet, Munro was under no illusions. Growth would be slow. Money for this scheme would also come gradually until it reached, he hoped, an estimated 48,000 rupees a year. Even so, years would elapse before results could become visible. Yet the expense incurred for educating the people would be 'amply repaid by the improvement of the country'.[33] His subordinate, A. D. Campbell, thought that the expense would not be so high if Andrew Bell's famous 'Madras System of Education' currently coming into vogue in Britain were to be implemented: children could be taught to write in the Native Schools, where advanced scholars taught those who were less advanced:

Europeans, in this respect, may with advantage take a lesson from Hindu simplicity. The shade of the spreading banyan tree, to be found in every village, is in this climate most wholesome and convenient, as it ever will be the most appropriate and beautiful scene for the village school, and the sand beneath it renders stationery altogether unnecessary.[34]

But reaction to this scheme in London was cautious. More details were needed, about funding the scheme and quality of instruction to be employed. Munro's new Committee of Public Instruction (CPI), supervised by the board of the College of Fort St George and in cooperation with the Madras School Book Society, began its work in 1826. Its report declared that success of the scheme would depend 'as much upon the coincidence of feeling on the part of the people as on the munificence of the Government itself'. Moreover, in order to succeed, 'a body of efficient teachers' would need to be trained at a 'central college'. Finally, three levels of learning were recommended: vernacular education in the villages; classical education, in Sanskrit and Persian, among other languages, such as Tamil; and modern education in English, arts, and sciences for advanced scholars. Two candidates for the teachers' college were to come from each district; and Brahmans were to be given preference. Initially each teaching candidate would receive a monthly stipend of fifteen rupees.[35]

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[32] Munro's Minute of 10 Mar. 1826, in Arbuthnot, *Selections*, ii. 333.

[33] Ibid. 335.

[34] A. D. Campbell's report of 17 Aug. 1823; Campbell's 'On the State of Education', 354; and Campbell, 'IV. On Native Education', *MJLS* (Apr. 1836), 110–11. In 1836 Campbell became the senior member of the board of the College of Fort St George. But his hopes for the Munro scheme coming into reality failed.

[35] Court of Directors (COD) to GOM, 18 May 1825, para. 18, TNA, MPC; Minute (Munro), 10 Mar. 1825, paras. 7–9, TNA, MPC; Arbuthnot, *Selections*, ii. 331–5; and H. Harkness (CPI secretary) to Collectors, 24 June 1826, paras. 3–7, TNA, MPC. Also see Basu (ed.), *Indian Education in Parliamentary Papers*, 112–16.

But before further action could be taken, Munro died. His death from cholera while on tour in Cuddapah, on 6 July 1827, on the very eve of his retirement when he might have gone to London to lobby in person, all but killed his entire scheme. Government actions during the decade that followed became a sorry saga of feuds, miscommunications, and paralysis. Neither of his successors, Stephen R. Lushington and Sir Frederick Adam, were men of stature or vision. Both lacked creative imagination. Hesitancy, indecision, and parochial interest drove the project into the ground. One need not pursue all of the tortuous twists and turns of internal politics in Madras to see how government support for modern education languished for over a decade before it began to take some tentative steps in 1839.

In the meantime, similar surveys conducted in the Presidencies of Bengal and Bombay brought comparable results. As already indicated, back in 1793, as the East India Company's Charter Renewal Act came before the House of Commons, an action that was required every twenty years, Parliament had voted that steps be taken to advance practical knowledge among all peoples of India under the Company's rule. Similar motions, each more expansive and more strongly worded than its predecessor, were entered into the Charter Renewal Acts of 1813 and 1833. The Bengal result, compiled by William Adam in his *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal*, would later reveal that, between the years 1834 and 1838, 13 per cent of 'clean-caste' school-age boys in Bengal were being enrolled as students in about 100,000 schools located within a total of 150,750 villages.[36]

Pressures for Modern Education in English

During the 1820s, even as faltering efforts by local governments failed to produce results and brought increasing frustration, incessant and steady pressures being mounted by the gentries in each presidency brought about changes in curriculum. Under a policy rubric that soon became known as 'downward filtration policy'[37] that unabashedly aimed to satisfy these elites, these same governments began to develop a parallel or advanced curriculum, in English. This was introduced within each of the previously established colleges where Orientalism had hitherto reigned supreme. Having begun in the Hindu College of Calcutta from its founding in 1816, it spread to both the Sanskrit College and the Mahomedan College and then up the Gangetic plain to the colleges of Agra and Delhi, as well as to Ajmer

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[36] Ed. A. N. Basu, and reprinted (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1941).

[37] Bruce Tiebout McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940; repr. 1966), 73–96.

(Mewar), Bareilly, and Lucknow. In Bombay, the same movement to English occurred in the recently established Elphinstone College, as also in the Hindu College of Pune. In due course, missionary institutions would also effectively and quickly respond to these same pressures.

Meanwhile, for a number of years beginning in the late 1820s, the gentry or *mahajans* of Madras met regularly at the house of George Norton, a judicial civil servant, for intellectual discussions and 'for raising the zeal and cooperation of the Native public mind toward the advancement of Education'. These discussions led, in 1830, to their organizing the Hindu Literary Society, as an affiliate of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. As pressure from 'respectable families' of Madras on behalf of English education continued to mount, Norton delivered public lectures in 1834 on modern education and on 'political privileges' open to them. In response to his prompting, the society decided to establish their own, fully equipped and modern English school. But they had hardly begun when, in 1837, John Anderson arrived and set up exactly the kind of school they wanted—except that high-caste children going to his school ran the risk of religious conversion.

This event seems to have provoked the gentry of Madras to making a strong written representation that was both a protest and a plea. In November 1839, leaders of the Madras Literary Society, Gazulu Lakshmanarasu Chetty, C. Narayanaswamy Naidu, and C. Srinivasa Pillay, presented the Governor, Lord (John) Elphinstone, with their Education Petition. Their bold text, written in Telugu, Tamil, and English, under which more than 70,000 signatures were affixed, declared:

My Lord, we are *the people* of this country, inheriting this land for thousands of generations. From our industry its wealth is supplied. By our arms it is defended from foreign foes. By our loyal obedience to the established Government its peace and safety are maintained. If diffusion of Education be among the highest benefits and duties of a Government, we, the people, petition for our share. We ask advancement through those means which . . . will best enable us . . . to promote the general interests of our native land. We ask it only in proportion to our long proved attachment to the British Government and its enlightened institutions . . . . We descend from the oldest Native subjects of the British Power in India; but we are the last who have been considered in the political endowments devoted to this liberal object.[38]

Expressing their dismay that, despite oft-repeated 'benevolent intentions' expressed by the Court of Directors, nothing more had been done, they demanded high schools and colleges like those in the 'sister Presidencies' of Bengal and Bombay. Nor could 'those objects ever be imparted', they

[38] George Norton, *Native Education in India* (Madras, 1848), 32.

declared in sombre tones, by interfering with their religion or by obliging them to renounce the faith in which they had been brought up.[39]

Apparently at this juncture, the name of Pachaiyappa Mudaliar surfaced. Pachaiyappa himself might have been shocked by the posthumous fame he was about to enjoy. Born in 1754, into a poor but respectable Vellalar family of Madras, he had become such an astute master *dubashi* (agent, broker, or go-between) that, at the time of his death, a large fortune had been left as a bequest for 'charitable and religious' purposes. Prolonged and vicious litigation over this legacy, lasting for decades, had ended in 1826 when Sir Herbert Compton, the Advocate-General, had uncovered flagrant misappropriations that justified his obtaining a court decree against further expenditures. What remained was a chest of jewels, together with a Thanjavur bond (*hundi*), the whole being worth over 800,000 rupees. In 1839, George Norton, as Compton's successor, not only brought the entire legacy under government 'protection' but also persuaded the new Governor of Madras, Lord (John) Elphinstone, to issue a charter incorporating 'Pachaiyappa Charities' as a permanent and self-perpetuating trust formed for the purpose of advancing modern education.[40] This charter, inscribed on fine parchment and sealed with the Company's crest, was duly delivered by George Norton to a governing body consisting 'wholly of Native Trustees' at a large meeting of assembled notables.[41]

What this petition directly reflected were two developments, both of which had brought the whole question of an advanced curriculum in English to the very forefront of an increasingly self-conscious 'public' in each of the presidencies. The first of these was the establishing of at least four new missionary institutions devoted solely to higher education, one of them English Baptist and three others being Scottish: all dedicated to the most advanced levels of modern education by means of an English curriculum. The second development, that emerged out of prior events and that came to the surface at roughly the same time, was the threefold formulation of a Resolution for Education in English. This formulation, as it was generated by the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, and his two leading advisers, Sir Charles Trevelyan and Lord [Thomas B.] Macaulay, was an

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[39] Norton, Native Education, 31–4.

[40] Ibid. 27–30; C. S. Srinivasachari, *History of the City of Madras* (Madras: P. Varadachary & Co., 1939), 238; and Evidence of George Norton, Esq., 6 June 1853, *PP* (General Sessions, HL, 1852–3), XXXII. 91.

[41] Norton, *Native Education*, 23; Evidence of George Norton, Esq., 6 June 1853, *PP* (General Sessions, HL, 1852–3), XXXII. 91–2; R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852–1891* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 37, 26–7, 35–40; and Arbuthnot, *Papers Relating to Public Instruction*, appendix K, p. iv.

event that would later lead, in nationalist historiography, to what has been called the 'Macaulay Minute'.

In 1818, William Carey had received a royal charter from the Danish Crown for the establishment of Serampore College. By then, the former shoemaker and then Baptist preacher who had been so inspired by deeds of Moravian and Pietist missionaries, especially the work of Christian Friedrich Schwartz in Thanjavur, that he had published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens* (1792) and who had then not only helped to organize the British Missionary Society, as the first voluntary association of its kind, but also come out to India as a pioneer missionary, had come a long way from his humble origins. By then, his promotional efforts had stirred up such a wave of missionary voluntarism that, ever after, he would become known, at least in the Anglo-American world, as 'The Father of Modern Missions'. By then, after years of being forbidden entry into Bengal by the East India Company, he had finally been allowed to establish the mission within the tiny Danish enclave of Serampore (Srirampur).[42] Even so, he himself had not been allowed to cross the Hugli into Calcutta until, in 1801, he had been offered a position as Professor of Oriental Languages in the newly established Fort William College. The regular salary that came from this position had enabled him to put his Serampore Mission on a more secure financial footing, freeing him from anxieties and uncertainties of irregular support from the BMS in London, support that, after 1815, would be disrupted by controversy stirred up by an unkind younger generation of missionaries who failed to appreciate the accomplishments of their predecessors.[43] Nor had the Serampore mission been able to expand much beyond the group that formed around its original 'Serampore Brethren' or 'Serampore Trio' of William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and David Ward.[44] Only after voluntary missionary agencies (BMS, CMS, and LMS) in Britain, in collaboration with 'free-trade' interests opposed to the Company's commercial monopoly, had formed an alliance and after a heated 'pamphlet war' waged by supporters of these missionary societies, together with much lobbing by 'saints' among Company's directors, (e.g. Charles Grant et al.) and friends in Parliament (Wilberforce, Thornton, et al.), had the 1792 'Pious Clause' been reinserted

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[42] This station, like its sister at Tranquebar, had long housed a work of the Royal Danish-Halle-SPCK Mission. John Kierenander, their last missionary, died in the same year that Carey arrived in Serampore.

[43] Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992), 57–67. E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793–1837: The History of Serampore and its Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 14–26.

[44] John Clark Marshman (1794–1877), *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*, 2 vols. (London: Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859).

into the Charter Renewal Act of 1813, thereby allowing any British missionary or merchant denied entry into India to appeal for redress. By 1818, therefore, Carey's reputation as a missionary, Orientalist, philologist, and polymath had made him world famous. The college charter bestowed by the Danish King granted authority to confer degrees on the same footing as any European university, with power to grant licences for theological training throughout India, a right that it has never relinquished. Thus, despite its Orientalist roots, a regular programme in English collegiate instruction was to become a standard part of the Serampore curriculum.

Between 1829 and 1837, another form of missionary higher education arrived in India—becoming settled in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras respectively. This came out of the Scottish Enlightenment and out of the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews, and the St Andrews lectures delivered by Thomas Chalmers. While John Wilson got to Bombay in 1829, one year earlier than Alexander Duff (1806–78) got to Calcutta, it was Duff who set in motion a new educational system in which English would no longer be taught merely as a second language. No longer would each student be encouraged to learn mainly by remaining within his own cultural idiom. Duff's Scots Calvinist brand of education was aimed, blatantly and directly, at 'the influential classes' and conducted exclusively in English. In his view, converts from 'respectable families', when properly trained, would become the best guarantee of 'truly Christian' and genuinely self-perpetuating congregations in India. As he put it, 'The mind, in grasping the import of new terms, is perpetually brought into contact with new ideas, and new truths, of which these terms are the symbols . . . so that by the time the English language has been mastered, the student is tenfold less the child of pantheism, idolatry, and superstition than before.'[45] This was 'downward filtration' with a vengeance.

Duff saw Sanskrit itself, which Brahmans saw as 'Divine', as inherently evil. To him, each of its concepts was inseparably linked to some idea or sentiment that indoctrinated a person into 'a stupendous system of error and falsehood'. In his view, education in English, including biblical literature, was inherently a *praeparatio evangelica*—so that an evangelical did not need to do more than provide literacy and exposure to Scripture to the mind of someone in whose heart and mind the Spirit of God would continue to work. The school that Duff established in 1830, with encouragement from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, eventually evolved into the Scottish Church College. While his reputation as a teacher became legendary, few of his students actually became Christians, even though he was able to instil both an interest in Christianity and a critical detachment from traditional forms

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[45] William Paton, *Alexander Duff, Pioneer of Missionary Education* (London: SVM, 1923), 66.

of India's religious institutions. Duff also made larger contributions to educational policy in India: as seen (1) in the systemic *magna carta* in the Charles Wood (Educational) Dispatch of 1854, which established the principle of government grants-in-aid to all schools, thereby giving an enormous boost to missionary educational institutions in India; and (2) in the founding of the University of Calcutta in 1857, prior to his final departure from India in 1863.[46] Among converts to Christianity, all of them high caste and mainly Brahmans, were Mohesh Chunder Ghose, Krishna Mohan Banerjea (later, an Anglican clergyman), Gopinath Nandi (afterwards, a Presbyterian minister), and Anundo Chunder Majumdar. His devoted disciple, champion, and biographer was Lal Behari Day, whose *Recollections of Alexander Duff* (London: T. Nelson, 1879) establishes Duff as one of the heroic figures in the history of missionary education in India.

While Duff's efforts were confined to Calcutta, his associate missionaries, John Wilson and John Anderson, carried the new strategy to Bombay and Madras. Wilson (1804–75), influenced by Duff's success, established his own English school in 1832, adding a college course (or section) in 1836. John Wilson served as principal of Wilson High School and of Wilson College, helped to establish Bombay University and became its Vice-Chancellor in 1869, and published numerous works of scholarship on such subjects as Parsi religion (1843), suppression of female infanticide in western India (1855), aboriginal tribes of the Bombay Presidency (1876), Indian caste (1877), and many more. His command of Sanskrit, Gujarati, Marathi, Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and Zend matched his command of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; and his regular editorials in local publications, both popular and scholarly, made him a major influence. Thus, even though he actually won few high-caste converts, and one Parsi, he became a towering public figure, one who reached the end of his life just one decade before the founding of the Indian National Congress. He may also be seen as one whose influence was in some degree instrumental in generating the rise of nationalism, if not of modern or 'syncretized' Hinduism itself.[47]

John Anderson (1805–55), like Wilson a product of the University of Edinburgh and like Duff convinced that education in English was the best way to impart Christian truth, aimed directly at 'the influential classes' of Indians whose rising clamour for modern higher learning was becoming so

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[46] Michael A. Laird, 'Alexander Duff, 1806–1878: Western Education as Preparation for the Gospel', in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 271–6.

[47] M. D. David, *John Wilson and his Institution* (Bombay: John Wilson Education Society, 1975); George Smith, *The Life of John Wilson, D.D., F.R.S.: For Fifty Years Philanthropist and Scholar in the East* (London: J. Murray, 1878).

loud. He opened his Scottish Free Church School in 1837,[48] a couple of years
before the Pachaiyappa Charities Trust came into being. With a completely
English, and completely imported curriculum, including teachers, books,
laboratory, and equipment, his school offered rigorous training in English
grammar, composition, and writing; logic, mathematics, and accounting;
sciences and political economy. It also required moral philosophy, theology,
biblical literature, and 'Evidences and Doctrines of Christianity'.[49] The
school attracted such throngs of students from among the Madras elite that
it outgrew its premises three times within its first decade. After the founding
of Madras University in 1862, seven years after his death, his educational
establishment became one of its earliest affiliated colleges. Renamed Madras
Christian College in 1877, it was later relocated on a grand and spacious scale
in Tambaram, a suburb some distance to the south. Its affiliated institution
for females was Madras Women's Christian College, located on College
Road, Nungambakkam, just next to the spacious premises of the Madras
Literary Society. Both institutions have remained as elite institutions ever
since their founding.

   Anderson's new school, therefore, simultaneously met felt needs and
touched raw nerves, mingling avid excitement and deep apprehension.
Yet, the incentives it offered were so strong that, despite occasional conver-
sions and mass withdrawals of 'twice-born' students which resulted, classes
would soon fill to capacity. There were always more applicants waiting to be
accepted than could be admitted. With each new outburst of conversions,
alarms and anxieties among families of students would mount higher. Such
traumatic events, as much as any other thing, served to concentrate minds,
galvanize elite protests, and provoke petitions to the government. Conver-
sions of Brahman boys prompted urban gentry to ask for the appropriation of
government funds specifically for the development of higher learning in
English, rather than for the (Village–*Tahsildari*–Collectorate) schools that
Munro had proposed over a decade earlier. Conversions of Brahman boys
in Anderson's school may well have been the motivating factor behind
generating pressure for diverting the Pachaiyappa bequest so that a college
could be established that could be governed exclusively by local notables
(*mahajans*). What brought about the Education Petition and the Pachaiyappa
Educational Trust cannot be understood without reference to the alarms that
had been stirred up by conversions in Anderson's school. How these were

   [48] J. Braidwood, *True Yoke-Fellows in the Mission Field: The Life and Labours of the Rev. John
Anderson and the Rev. Robert Johnston, Traced in the Rise and Development of the Madras Free Church
Mission* (London: James Nisbet, 1862).
   [49] Arthur Mayhew, *Christianity and the Government of India* (London: Faber & Gwyer Ltd., 1929),
134–5; Mohammad Mohar Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833–1857*
(Chittagong: Mehrob Publications 1965); McCully, *English Education*, 127.

then to play out during the next decade can be seen as a cautionary tale—a salutary lesson in the need for communal tolerance, especially between upper class missionaries and elite communities.

Mahajans *vs. Missionary Educators*

All over British India, there were roiling encounters between protagonists for or against English, as also for or against vernacular language education and for or against classical Indian languages. In the controversies that ensued, a number of ironies can also be observed. While most Evangelical or Protestant missionaries, since the time of Ziegenbalg's arrival at Tranquebar in 1706, had followed the Halle principle of promoting and providing universal literacy—so that each could read in her or his 'mother tongue'—missionary advocates of 'downward filtration' were promoting higher education in English. Scottish Free Church missionaries such as Duff and Anderson, and High Church (Anglican) missionaries, such as Robert Noble and Charles Freer Andrews, represented this emphasis. All missionaries tended to reflect and represent the social distinctions of classes within British society from which they had come. Some of these represented upwardly mobile aspirations, if not pretensions, of missionaries from dissenting or 'mechanics' class backgrounds in Britain. Thus, Carey, for example, despite having risen far from his shoemaking roots to worldwide fame, never ceased to favour the levelling qualities of vernacular (and Oriental) languages. So too did many CMS missionaries, especially those who worked in the interior (*mufassal*) locations, many of whom were doing all in their power to destroy caste prejudices in India. For them, vernacular education was the ultimate device for destroying the monopoly over learning held by high-caste elites. They could see that, as in the case of classical (Oriental) languages, English as a classical language in India would serve to enhance, preserve, and solidify the privileges that elites already held. All Europeans in India, both official and non-official (e.g. barristers, bankers, planters, teachers, and others), became deeply divided over this issue, with some favouring English for the high-caste elites and others favouring 'national education' in vernacular languages as a common 'level ground' on which those from downtrodden classes could hope to compete on more equal terms. What happened within the civic cultures of Madras during the 1840s serves as a case study for seeing how such conflicts and differences played out. To that end, a magnifying lens can serve to focus attention more closely onto such controversies within Madras during the 1840s.

On 14 April 1841, 'amidst a vast multitude' of the notables (*mahajans*) who assembled 'within and without the College Hall', the Madras University's High School formally opened. Overnight, this new institution

became the object of great hope and prestige.[50] With its budget of 20,000 rupees, more than the government had spent in years, the first of several Pachaiyappa schools opened. Buildings for 600 students were erected in Black Town; a modern curriculum devised; teachers, some of whom were European, were recruited; and 500 students enrolled at elementary, high school, and collegiate levels. With Norton as both 'patron' and president of the fledgling 'Madras University', hopes ran high.[51] In a published report dated 12 February 1841, Norton firmly rejected 'frittering away' of funds on wasteful sinecures or 'country schemes' and settled for nothing less than 'a collegiate institution' modestly begun as a 'preparatory school'. With 'Native' governance assured,[52] the University Board determined that 'university standards would be so high that only the highest castes would ever qualify' for admission. Even so, English instruction and high tuition would also serve to effectively bar admission of 'the lower orders'.[53] Norton's words that 'Light must touch the mountain tops before it pierces to the depths'[54] reflected a commitment to 'downward filtration'.

Plans for attaining full university status included a University (Presidency) College, an engineering college, a medical college, and four English high schools. 'The mental improvement of the upper classes of the Native Community, who alone [would have] the leisure and means to pursue the higher branches of study in European literature, science, and philosophy, as well as Native learning and languages' would explicitly prohibit religious teachings or 'anything distasteful to the Natives generally, which might be fatal to the very objects sought'.[55]

Soon after this, however, the Marquess of Tweeddale succeeded Lord Elphinstone as Governor. An old crony and comrade in arms of 'the Duke', and a staunch supporter of the Scottish Church, he 'favoured practical knowledge'. In his view, making 'Native students rehearse Shakespeare' or explain the parts of an engine 'like so many parrots' was 'absurd'. 'Private Schools' run by missionaries were already more developed and 'on a better footing'. University plans developed by the Advocate-General (Norton) were 'extremely visionary'.[56] Such words quickly brought 'very painful

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[50] 'The Opening of the Madras University', *Annual Reports of Madras University* (Madras, 1842), app. 3; and Norton, *Native Education*, 47.

[51] Evidence of George Norton, 6 June 1853, *PP* (General Sessions, HL, 1852–3), XXXII. 91–2.

[52] Minutes of Lord Elphinstone, 12 Dec. 1839, 12 Feb. 1841, London, India Office Library and Records (now BL, OIOC), Elphinstone Collection (hereafter, Elphinstone Papers), Eur. MSS. F. 87.

[53] Norton, *Native Education*, 44–52.

[54] Ibid. Arbuthnot, *Papers Relating to Public Instruction*, 47.

[55] *Annual Reports of Madras University*, app. 1, pp. 41–7, app. 3, pp. 49–52.

[56] Tweeddale to Lord Fitzgerald and Vesci, 23 Feb. 1843, BL, OIOC, Tweeddale Collection (hereafter Tweeddale Papers), Eur. MSS. F. 96, Home Private Letter Book, pp. 84–7.

mortification' to the gentry of Madras.[57] As the Governor, he presented achievement awards at Anderson's school while, in the same month, not attending ceremonies at the University High School.[58] With mounting dismay and frustration, previous authorities could see that official delays and obstructions were a means to defeat their whole scheme.[59] Dismay and disgust led to resignations from the University Board.

As the day of the first public examinations for entry into the 'uncovenanted civil service' ever held in Madras approached, Tweeddale stripped away previously assigned functions of the University Board and then announced that these would be conducted by hand-picked members of his new Council of Education, all of whom were Europeans sympathetic to 'Christian' causes.[60] Through informers, the Madras gentry soon learned that questions in the examination would be 'related to the Christian religion, its superiority, influence, &c . . . that would be an offence to Hindus'.[61] Worse yet, prizes would be offered in Greek and Latin, languages that could only be learned at the private grammar school run by John Anderson.[62] When questioned, Tweeddale replied that he saw no reason for questions on Shakespeare or on scientific 'refinements' that were 'subtle and superficial' rather than for 'solid, moral and thinking minds, which . . . are the only foundation of real social progress, and of a vigorous national intellect'.[63] The examinations were boycotted; and, when only attempted by a handful of poorly trained people from lower castes, were a complete failure.

Public consternation mounted, with many letters to newspapers, some signed by hundreds; and petitions signed by thousands. Norton, totally dismayed at the destruction of what he had worked so long to achieve, minced no words. A university, he declared, 'has totally distinct objects from the *elementary education of the masses*, which may be more strictly considered national education. It is entirely and solely directed to the superior education of the higher orders; and it would be ruinous to its existence to identify or amalgamate its discipline and objects with those of elementary schools.'[64] As far as he was concerned, nothing short of 'an appeal to the Native public in order that the feelings of the Native community might be manifested' would

[57] Norton, *Native Education*, 63.

[58] Walter Elliot to Lord (John) Elphinstone (Former Governor of Fort St George), 22 Sept. 1843. Elphinstone Papers, BL, OIOC, Eur. MSS. F. 87.

[59] Elliot to Elphinstone, 23 Jan. 1844, Elphinstone Papers, J. 10 (D-41).

[60] Norton to Select Committee, House of Lords, *PP* (1852–3), XXXII. 101–11.

[61] Ibid. 67, 70–6, 111.

[62] *Proceedings at the Public Meeting of the Hindu Community, Held in the Rooms of Patcheapa's Institution, on Wednesday, 7th October 1846* (Madras, 1846), 7–8.

[63] Arbuthnot, *Papers Relating to Public Instruction*, 73.

[64] Norton, *Native Education*, 59–60.

have to penetrate the consciousness of authorities in London for the current deplorable situation to be remedied.[65]

In August 1846, Tweeddale circulated plans to introduce the Bible as a 'textbook' in all government-supported 'national' schools. This, he felt, was the only means by which 'natives' might achieve 'all those high qualities which they admire so much in the character of those whom Providence has placed to rule over them'.[66] As word of this latest action spread, even his staunchest supporters in Madras and London began to abandon him. Sober missionaries deprecated his action, calling it 'rash', dangerous, and wrong. Conversion, after all, was internal and voluntary, not something imposed by fiat. John Tucker, Secretary of the CMS in Madras, later wrote about how this one action had split the local missionary community.[67]

A few weeks later, the case of a high-caste girl name Muniatha attending the Scottish Free Church School who had declared herself a Christian and sought asylum came before the Supreme Court. The girl's family, declaring her but a child 'captured' and 'detained' 'by force and fraud', had succeeded in getting a writ of habeas corpus served. As Anderson and the girl entered the packed courtroom, screams of outrage filled the air and thousands of voices outside the building added to the din. After one distraught relative tried to seize the girl by force, the presiding judge, Sir Edward Gambier, made clear that a child 'under years of discretion' could not be taken away 'against the consent of parties having charge of it'.[68] After two European doctors examined the girl in order to 'discover' whether she had reached 'years of decision', custody was awarded to Anderson. For the *mahajan* community of Madras, however, this action was the last straw. The defiling and polluting of a high-caste female was the ultimate disgrace. When compounded with other recent conversions and defilements of Brahman schoolboys, smouldering resentments exploded.[69]

[65] Norton to Select Committee, House of Lords, 15 June 1853, *PP* (1852–3), XXXII. 110.
[66] 'Minute of the Marquess of Tweeddale on Education and the Introduction of the Bible as a Class-Book, With a Copy of a Despatch from the Court of Directors Related to the Same', appendix to Sixth Report of the Select Committee . . . on the Affairs of East India Company, 1853, *PP* (General Sessions, HC, 1852–3), XXIX (897). 189–92 (hereafter, App. Sixth Report, HC, 1853).
[67] Evidence of Revd John Tucker before Select Committee, 28 July 1853: ibid. 99.
[68] H. C. Montgomery, 9 Aug. 1847, Proceedings Relative to the Native Girl Mooneatha, IOLR, Madras Judicial Consultations (hereafter, MJC); London, BL, OIOC, Collections of the Board of Control or Board's Collection (BC), No. 112.092; and George Norton to GOM, 7 July 1847, ibid. The Supreme Court of Madras, under the Crown, should not be confused with the Sadr Adalat, the Company's court of highest appeal (also a court of original jurisdiction). In 1861, both merged into the High Court. Appeals went to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the House of Lords, the highest appellate tribunal of the British Empire.
[69] Proceedings in Supreme Court on Two Writs of Habeas Corpus against the Rev. Mr. Anderson, ibid., BC, No. 109.461.

Just then a highly combustible case (previously discussed in Chapter 10: pp. 280–4) reached the Sadr Adalat. This stemmed from an attack, on 11 November, on Christian congregations in villages of Tirunelveli. Hundreds of houses had been destroyed, property taken, men beaten, and women violated.[70] Investigations revealed that agents of the Vibuthi Sangam (Ashes Society), in collusion with the Chatur Veda Siddantha Sabha of Madras, had organized the violence. After their arrest and conviction, leaders of the disturbance had appealed to the Sadr Adalat.[71] In May 1846, the European judges clashed. The pro-missionary justice, G. J. Waters, upheld the conviction. His decision was voted down. Malcolm Lewin, a vehemently anti-missionary Unitarian,[72] was joined by the third justice (Boileau), in overthrowing the Tirunelveli convictions.[73] When this happened, the Judicial Member of Government—who was not just the Chief Judge of the Sadr Adalat but also the only Member of Governor's Council who happened to be in town—ordered that all transcripts be turned over to the government for review. The justices refused, on grounds that such executive intrusions would compromise judicial impartiality.[74] When word of this 'judicial rebellion' reached Tweeddale, far away in the Niligiri Hill Station of Ootacamund whither he had gone to escape the hot season, he summarily dismissed all three justices of the Sadr Adalat.[75] To further compound matters, 'leaks' of official documents concerning these events reached local newspapers. The public uproar that followed lasted for months. Prominent leaders in Madras society took sides. Sympathy for abused Christians collided with sympathy for abused 'Hindus'. Each side self-righteously appealed to 'free conscience', 'civil rights', and 'religious liberty'.[76] Yet, interestingly, both opponents and

[70] 'Outrages in Tinnevelly Occasioned by Bad Feeling Between the Hindoos and Native Christians', MJC, No. 2, 10 Feb. 1846, BC, No. 101.675. BL, OIOC.

[71] Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'The Impact of Conversion and Social Reform upon Society in South India . . . With Special Reference to Tinnevelly', in C. H. Philips and M. D. Wainwright (eds.), *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernization* (London: University of London School of Oriental and African Studies 1976), 207–10.

[72] E. F. Elliott to J. F. Thomas, GOM, MJC, no. 54, 11 Aug. 1847, BC, 109.460. Lewin's trouble began during Elphinstone's tenure. On Lewin and Waters, see: Elphinstone Papers, Box 2-C, 3-D.

[73] Memorial of Lewin and Boileau to COD, MJC, 505. 2849; Minute (Lewin), 18 Apr. 1846, MJC, 9 June 1846, 506. 3231–59; and 'Papers Relating to the Removal of Mr. Lewin from the Office of Judge of the Sudder Dewanny Adalat', *PP* (General Sessions, HC, 1852–3), XXVII (426). 551–2.

[74] 'Minute by the Hon. Sir T. H. Maddock, Knt', 24 Aug. 1845, *PP* (Appendix to Report of Select Committee, HL, 1852), 357; and *Madras Spectator*, 24 Sept. 1846.

[75] 'Abstraction of Official Papers from Government Offices, Whole Secret Letter of 1 March 1848, &c', MJC, BC, 113.420.

[76] *Madras Native Herald*, 5 June 1847, in MJC, BC, 112.092; *Madras Spectator* (1846–7); *The Atlas*, 21 Sept. 1846; *The Crescent* and *United Services Gazette*, in *PP* (General Sessions, HC, 1852–3), XXVII (426). 566–9.

supporters of missionaries joined together in condemning the government for introducing the Bible as a textbook in government schools and for dismissing the Sadr Court justices. The *Native Herald*, published by the Scottish Free Church Mission, remained in stubborn isolation.[77]

By this time, the *mahajan* communities of Madras had had enough. Leaders of the Hindu Literary Society, Gazulu Lakshmanarasu Chetty and T. Narasinga Rao, called for a 'public meeting of the Hindu Community'. On the evening of 7 October 1846, thousands came to Pachaiyappa's Hall, so many that mounted police had to be deployed to assure 'public order'.[78] The draft of a petition to the Court of Directors in London was read to the assembly. This accused the East India Company of 'ingratitude, partiality, and injustice' toward loyal Indian subjects without whose aid its supremacy over India could never have been achieved. The Tweeddale government was accused of aiding and abetting the work of missionaries and, at the same time, deliberately eroding those special positions and privileges that the gentry of Madras had enjoyed for two centuries. Unless public confidence could be restored, the petitioners predicted, 'the progress of disaffection and turbulence' against Company rule would become dangerous. Twelve thousand signatures (*chevralu*) of 'loyal subjects' were placed onto the three drafts of the petition—one in Tamil, one in Telugu, and one in English—which were then formally presented to the government for transmission to authorities in London.[79]

That the Court of Directors shared the same views as the petitioners soon became evident. Expressing 'deep concern' over the tendency 'by all parties to give their disputes a religious character', the Court of Directors censured the Governor. His actions were 'incompatible with the calm and impartial administration of justice' and could not 'too strongly be deprecated'. What most concerned them was his application of an 'entirely new' and never before used term—'heathen'—to the people of India. As they put it: 'As applied to Hindoos, or to Hindoos and Mohamedans conjointly, it cannot but be felt as an opprobrious epithet. We consider it to be repugnant to that regard for the feelings of the people which forms an essential part of genuine toleration. We should, therefore, have expected that the phrase "heathen"

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[77] For letters from Hindus at Tirunelveli, see 'Petitions . . . [re] Disturbances in Tinnevelly', in GOM to COD, 8 May 1848, MJC, BC, 114.783; TNA, MPC, No. 20, 10 Aug. 1847, 814. 3579–601; TNA, MPC, No. 52, 23 Mar. 1847, 818. 1169–71.

[78] Minute of Henry Chamier, 26 July 1847, para. 17; Report of E. F. Elliott, 11 Aug. 1847, MJC, BC, No. 109.460, in OIOC: BL.

[79] 'Complaints of Natives on the Subject of Religion', MJC; BC, No. 109.457, pp. 90–2. This is the only surviving original copy of the 'Hindu Memorial'. Over 180 pages of signatures: 7,000 in Tamil, 3,000 in Telugu, and 2,000 in Roman (English) script, caste names and scripts in blocks (with addresses); each with antique suffix *chevralu*, or 'by the hand of'. Most names seem to be Vaishnava or Sri-Vaishnava.

would have been censured by Government . . . and we have observed with equal surprise and disapprobation that the phrase is adopted in the proceedings of the Government itself.'[80] Devout and faithful member of the Church of Scotland he seems to have been and a staunch supporter of missionary education; but by then Tweeddale's ability to govern had already become too compromised for him to continue.

Ascendancy of English in Upper-Class Education

Not just because of missionaries and social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and certainly not because of campaigns carried on by Company governments or officials, but primarily due to relentless and steady pressures of literate elites of India, mainly Brahmans and Kayasthas, English finally became recognized as the fourth classical language of India—after Sanskrit, Tamil, and Persian (or Perso–Arabic). Much has been made, especially by those who forged and galvanized nationalist ideologies, of what is called 'Macaulay's Minute'. It is certainly significant that, after strenuous efforts to establish various forms of Orientalism, the Government of India finally recognized the futility of constantly frustrating ceaseless efforts by those high-caste elite communities who were the administrative backbone of the Raj.[81]

To aspiring *mahajan* elites, the decision to support modern education in English, with Western-style schools and universities, was hardly innovative or radical, despite the outrageously chauvinist and condescending rhetoric in which this was later couched and enunciated. In his famous, or infamous, 'Minute on Education' of 2 February 1835, Thomas Babington [later Lord Macaulay] wrote: 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.'[82] A resolution was passed by the government.[83] Admission to the new schools was to be open to all, regardless of caste, race,

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[80] Dispatch, COD to GOM (Public Department), No. 4, 1 Dec. 1847, para. 4, MJC, BC, 112.092; and 'Complaints of the Natives of India on the Subject of Religion', 28 Mar. 1848, MJC, BC, 113.374. COD to GOM (Judicial Department), No. 1, 20 Jan. 1847, 'Papers Relating to the Removal of Mr. Malcolm Lewin . . .', appendix 11 to Report of Select Committee on Indian Territories, *PP* (HC,1852–3), XXVII. 558.

[81] '418. C. E. Trevelyan to Bentinck', Calcutta: 18 Mar. 1832: ibid., I. 776–7: '698. C. E. Trevelyan to Bentinck', Calcutta: 9 Apr. 1834: II. 1238–9. C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London: Longman, Orme, Green, & Longmans, 1838).

[82] This, often published and reprinted, is found and contextualized in *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck: Governor-General of India, 1828–1835*, ed. [Sir Cyril] C. H. Philips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), ii. 1403–13 [793].

[83] No. 418: C. E. Trevelyan to Bentinck, Calcutta, 18 Mar. 1832; No. 698: 9 Apr. 1834, ibid., i. 776–7, ii. 1238–9. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*.

or belief. Emphasis would be on secular, 'practical', or scientific subjects. The language of instruction at higher levels would be English.[84]

Years would pass before more was done to reinforce what was, in reality, a decision made by the Governor-General, Lord Bentinck, and Sir Charles Trevelyan, his private secretary, who was the brother-in-law of Macaulay. No new funds were raised to make this more than a policy of empty words. Indeed, no Orientalist institutions were abolished, nor was support for them much diminished. Another twenty years would pass before more than empty words were applied to the implementation of this new emphasis upon English in higher education. Not until the historic 1854 Dispatch sent by Sir Charles Wood (later Lord Halifax), President of the Board of Control in London, was this new policy given teeth.[85] Even then, equal emphasis was given to tax-supported vernacular education in the *mufassal*. In either case, the preponderance of educational institutions run by missionaries made their schools the main beneficiaries of the 'grant-in-aid' system that thereafter supported education in all of British India. That, after so many years of dithering, such a policy was finally brought into being can be seen as arising from two developments. First, by the 1850s, the doctrine that popular education was a duty of government had become axiomatic so that when the new East India Company (Charter Renewal) Act was introduced in June of 1853, Wood emphasized the need to provide education and enlightenment for the people of India. Second, the refashioning of educational structures in India so that missionary and privately run institutions in India had become predominant made it incumbent for each *pukka* school to receive some sort of grant-in-aid. The leading proponents of this policy, in addition to Wood, were Alexander Duff, Sir Charles Trevelyan, and John Clark Marshman, son of the Serampore missionary and editor of the influential *Friend of India* in Calcutta.[86] When leaders among Calcutta's *bhadralok*, such as Radha Kanta Deb, Rom Gopal Ghose, and Koylas Chandra Bose, learned of what was proposed, a meeting was convened to point out omissions in the scheme. One was concerned about the future of Oriental learning; another wanted English education expanded further so that Natives could compete for civil service positions. Concern was also expressed over there not being an immediate provision for universities in India. The wording of the Dispatch promulgated in July 1854 seems to have

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[84] *Corespondence of Bentinck*, ii. 1405. Macaulay's famously ignorant and outrageous statement was: 'I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.'

[85] McCully, *English Education*, 131–42.   [86] Ibid. 132.

been left to the two missionaries, Duff and Marshman, who were so influential in bringing about the draft which bore Wood's name.[87]

Contrary to popular historiography that has prevailed for over a century, therefore, the establishment of English was not a British imposition upon India's elites. Rather, it was the result of persistent efforts by those dominant elites (*mahajans*) to preserve if not enhance their predominance within India, and also to hold at bay people from the 'lower orders' whose missionary education and consequent literacy was mainly in vernacular languages. Of course many within these literate classes had descended from those 'brokers' or 'go-betweens' (*dubashis*) who had earlier helped to bring the Raj into existence. Thus, even as the real power of many Muslim and Hindu princes had declined, so that they had lost prestige within their many domains, the new leaders of India were those who, coming from good and high but not princely classes, had taken to English and equipped themselves with modern educations. While princes lived amid their palaces, gardens, and harems, burying themselves in false fronts and opulent decadence, sitting like hawks in gilded cages, dreaming relics of past glory who relished taking British nobles out into their jungles to shoot tigers, growing influence, power, prestige, and respect went to the modern, English-speaking *mahajans*. As princes faded from sight, it was these notables who acted on behalf of the New India. It was they who stood between the British rulers and most of India's peoples. Mostly upper caste, they came from the modern seaport cities—Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Some were wealthy landholders or *zamindars*, such as the famous Tagore family. Some were officials who collected revenue. Some filled thousands of bureaucratic positions in government offices. Some who were extremely erudite judges held seats in the High Courts. As numbers of college educated officials in government service rapidly multiplied into scores of thousands and as many qualified to enter newly opened and proliferating government activities—such as the post office, public works, railways and roads, or irrigation departments—opportunities opened for those whose training made them qualified. At the same time, qualified professional men outside of government service multiplied even more rapidly. Attorneys fluent in English, barristers and solicitors, joined pleaders and *vakils*, especially in the higher courts. This became even more evident as more people realized that they could actually sue the government or appeal court decisions to the highest courts. Ever more teachers were needed, not just to teach the children of new generations of aspiring leaders, but also to train the would-be lawyers, officials, teachers, doctors, and engineers. Journalists and writers tried to influence their fellow Indians and Europeans on important and controversial issues.

[87] Ibid. 132, 136.

All over India, as these new groups came to realize their common bonds as mediators between the government and their own people, English and Indian English—a hybrid 'Indish' having its own rich vocabulary—became the mark of the influential who were becoming the new ruling class. Those who could read and write English were able to send or receive letters and to read newspapers from all over the country if not beyond. From classical and contemporary forms of literature, they could not only learn of English pride in England's history and English things; but they themselves could begin to contribute, with increasing frequency and volume, to a rising tide of Indian literature, with Indian pride in India's history and things Indian. Ironically, English in India and Indian English became the main vehicle for an all–India national consciousness, much of this conveyed through the educational institutions that were Christian, initially run by missionaries who, over the long run, would themselves gradually be phased out.

Missionary Compromise and Elite Co-option

Ever since 1706, missionaries from Halle had emphasized 'mother tongue' literacy and learning, so that each people in India could gain access to divine revelation in Sacred Writ and in Nature. To that end, they had built educational and other institutions in each vernacular language. Yet, by the turn of the twentieth century, thousands of missionaries had flooded into India, many under the auspices of scores of new missionary societies, both Protestant and Catholic. Moreover, in the wake of government 'grant-in-aid' subsidies that followed the Wood Dispatch of 1854, modern school systems run by missionaries also proliferated and spread rapidly across the length and breadth of the continent.

Eventually, there was scarcely a remote corner of the continent where missionary boarding schools, both Catholic and Protestant—with parallel systems of schools for girls and women—could not be found. At the same time, there were also two other parallel systems of education—the one run by local governments and the other run by a variety of other private, mainly sectarian agencies (e.g. Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Sikh, etc.). At their apex, superimposed on each of these systems were high schools and colleges. Some of the latter were theological seminaries or religious training academies, as well as medical schools and various forms of technical (agricultural or industrial) institutes. In all of the upper levels, learning was conveyed with English as the standard medium of instruction and discourse. All in all, educational institutions run by Christian missionaries enjoyed enormous prestige and success.

At the apex of all institutions of higher learning, linked to universities that began to come into being by government fiat in 1861, were elite colleges.

Among the very best of these, each with its own modern curriculum being taught almost exclusively in English, were missionary-run colleges. These were located first in metropolitan cities of the presidencies themselves and then more thinly dispersed in the interior and the frontier regions. As primary vehicles for conveying the latest in modern science and learning over every kind, elite missionary institutions that paralleled government institutions often attracted more students from among Hindu elites (*bhadralok*) than from Christian communities. Not counting institutions in Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, and Kottayam, or William Carey's Serampore College (1818) and Bishop's College, Calcutta (*c.*1820), the earliest elite colleges were Alexander Duff's Institution in Calcutta (1830), later renamed Scottish Church College, John Wilson's Institution in Bombay (1835), renamed Wilson College, and John Anderson's Institution (1837), renamed Madras Christian College. The process of building elite colleges culminated in the north-west with Forman Christian College, out of the Rang Mahal School of Lahore (1865–9); and St Stephen's College of Delhi (1870). Among other elite colleges emerging during these same years, each with its own unique history, only a few can be mentioned, e.g. Noble College in Machlipatnam (1842); Stephen Hislop's college (Nagpur, 1844), St John's College, Agra; Allahabad (Ewing) Christian College of Allahabad (1901); Guntur Christian College (1893); and Ahmednagar College (1947). A parallel development of women's (or zenana) Christian colleges would later also stretch across the whole continent: Lucknow's Isabella Thoburn College for Women (1870); Lahore's Kinnaird College for Women (1926); Madras Women's Christian College (1915); Vellore's Christian Medical College for Women (1916—it admitted men in 1947); Madurai's Lady Doak College for Women (1948). or Tirunelveli's Sarah Tucker College (1956). Eventually, these elite colleges would remain at the apex of as many as 250 colleges, of varying character and quality.[88]

Such an expansion of advanced learning in English for elites did not occur without corrosive changes in the very character of the most prestigious missionary institutions. Elite missionary colleges soon tended to cater more heavily to non-Christian upper-caste *mahajans*, with sometimes up to 80 per cent of students enrolled not being Christians. With only modest numbers of upwardly mobile Christians, most of whom rarely came from lowest castes among them, missionaries were forced to confront serious dilemmas. These were of two kinds, and faced in two directions—one arising from practical

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[88] Mercy Henry, 'Mission versus Necessity for Christian College: Challenges of Economics and Survival', *Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion* (http://www.cuac.org/53810_64423_ [12/7/2005]). These were to have an 'enormous impact on Indian higher education'. Official data indicates that India has 304 universities (54 open universities among them) and 14,500 colleges. Central universities are the elite research institutions.

'facts-on-the-ground' and another coming from profound changes in theological outlook. However much these changes were related to each other, in dialectical or dialogical terms, and however these two categories of changes might together also have caused, or been caused by, each other is a subject of greater weight than needs to be addressed definitively here.

One fact that remains indisputable is that acceptance of government 'grants-in-aid' brought about profound changes in the very character of missionary education. While this occurred at all levels, it was especially pronounced at the collegiate level. Funding pressures from government, accompanied by a dwindling of voluntary contributions from overseas, brought about a secularization in curricula, so that course content and pedagogy gradually became more vaguely moralistic than Christian. As a consequence of per capita enrolment demands and state-required examinations, religious content became marginalized and explicitly Christian (Bible) courses were either relegated to the sidelines or disappeared altogether. Parental aspirations for material gain and ostentation, especially employment in government or in professions, took precedence over religiosity and spirituality. Due to lower costs, missionary school systems in towns and villages of the interior (*mufassal*) were staffed almost exclusively by Native Indian teachers. Europeans occupying administrative and supervisory positions gradually also tended to be phased out. Moreover, although European missionary professors tended to hold high positions in most elite colleges, by the twentieth century these gradually dwindled but never entirely disappeared.[89]

After the conquest of the Punjab in the 1840s, and the Great Rebellion (aka Mutiny) in 1857, preconceived notions broke down. As two-thirds of all missionaries eventually were women, new dilemmas arose. Even as universalistic Christian claims clashed with hard realities on the ground, efforts to build institutions based upon principles of equality were contradicted by demands of social elites. Complex staff relations within increasingly influential schools and colleges, mingling affection and intimacy with affronts and betrayals, occasionally called for delicate negotiation or compromise. Missionaries found themselves forced to deal simultaneously with Indian Christians, government officials, foes of Christianity, non-Christian parents and students. Upper-class, university-educated missionaries and local clergy who wanted to influence local Hindu and Muslim gentry found themselves, at the very same time, striving for the rights of the oppressed, the stigmatized, the landless labourers, and the 'untouchables'

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[89] Hayden J. A. Bellenoit, 'Missionary Education, Knowledge and North Indian Society, *c.*1880–1915' (Oxford University, D.Phil. thesis 2005), presents abundant empirical data, covering much of North India. Cf. ch. 6: 'Failures of Education: Infrastructural Limits and Internal Reproductions', pp. 158–93.

(who now call themselves *Dalits*)—people in villages that were ruled over by the very same gentry whose offspring were their students. Finally, from 1885 onwards, voluntary associations formed by local gentry (*mahajans*), rising nationalist aspirations, and the fact that many missionaries tended to sympathize with nationalists led to complex anomalies and conflicts. These were exacerbated, especially when new forms of indigenous Christianity that would outlive imperial rule and persistent Christian entanglements within the imperial regime seemed to be at odds and to contradict each other. Since many Christians, including missionaries, sympathized with nationalist aspirations, dilemmas arose that would never be fully resolved.[90]

As the nineteenth century came to an end, some theologically liberal missionaries within a cultural and intellectual climate of a post-Darwinian West who enshrined the 'higher' or 'scientific' ethos of the Enlightenment repeatedly confused 'conversion' and submission to the Gospel of Christ with 'civilization'. As a worthy goal for which to strive, they then went on to exalt and extol a particular vision of Brahmanical civilization. Among upper-class, intellectually eclectic, and sophisticated missionaries such as William Miller, Principal of Madras Christian College, the 'downward filtration' doctrine of the early nineteenth century was replaced by what became known as 'upward fulfilment' doctrine.[91] This doctrine served as a convenient excuse for explaining why it was that Europeans had not been effective in helping to bring about conversions among the high-caste elites of India. The Christian task, the new doctrine explained, was not so much to convert peoples of India as to permeate Indian society with Christian values. In order to accomplish this, missionary scholars and thinkers needed to influence the elites who were taking to Western education in such droves. 'Conversion' as such was no longer deemed to be such a worthy goal. Since much in the life and conduct of Hindus and Muslims was praiseworthy, a new strategy was articulated by J. N. Farquhar.[92] Since all religions were, in some measure, divinely inspired, and since Hinduism was leading Indians towards Christianity, missionaries had only to devote more effort to 'dialogue' and 'mutual understanding' until, in the fullness of time,

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[90] Two studies which show how such complexities played out in the Punjab, during the late 19th century, serve as a template for understanding other parts of India: Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power, 1818–1940* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002); John C. B. Webster, *The Christian Community in Nineteenth Century North India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1976).

[91] John P. Jones, *India's Problem: Krishna or Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1903), 299, 355; Alfred George Hogg, *Karma and Redemption: An Essay toward the Interpretation of Hinduism and the Re-statement of Christianity* (London: Christian Literature Society, 1909).

[92] Eric J. Sharpe, *Not to Destroy but to Fulfil: The Contribution of J. N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought in India before 1914* ([Lund]: Gleerup, [1965]); J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913 [5th impression 1930]).

all the world would come to Christ. This kind of thinking in the West, sometimes called 'fulfilment theory' or 'fulfilment theology', gained fairly wide acceptance among some missionaries. It was put forward both in the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago in 1892 and in the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910.[93]

Among some Indian Christian thinkers also, theological liberalism of this kind gained headway, and eventual ascendancy in elite institutions. In Bengal and North India, where there were relatively fewer Indian Christians and where non-Christian Brahmans were more visible than Christians, Krishna Mohan Banerjea argued in 1875 that Hindus could become Christians without abandoning their cultural or social traditions; another Brahman convert, Kali Charan Banerjea, in his Calcutta Christo Samaj (begun in 1887), required neither liturgy nor clergy; and Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, a Brahman Catholic, donned the ochre robe of a mendicant *sadhu* and held that one could be both a Hindu and a Christian. In Maharashtra, Narayan Vaman Tilak, a prominent Brahman Christian poet, founded a Christian ashram in 1917; and an Anglican Christa Seva Sangh (Christian Service Society) was established. In Madras, the 'National Church', founded in 1886, only survived into the 1920s. But by saying that Christianity in India should be Indian in culture, many of these later thinkers were essentially saying something different, something much less orthodox than what Vedanayakam Sastriar or Roberto de Nobili would have had in mind, even when they used many of the same *Sanskriti* words and concepts.

But, in spite of 'upward fulfilment' views held by elite missionaries, there were plenty of theologically more conservative and pragmatic missionaries. These, coming from lower levels of society in their homelands—American, British, and European societies—tended to work within an entirely different cultural ethos and lower social stratas of *āvarna* caste communities which were all but ignored by upper-class European missionaries. Radical dissenters or nonconformists, already critically conscious that Methodism in Britain was no longer working class but was becoming middle class, saw a dangerous loss of doctrinal clarity and spiritual fire within elite English-medium Christian colleges. For them and for others, theological liberalism was a more serious problem than caste or culture. Such missionaries, from whatever country they came, rejected views of those who were no longer willing to share the 'Pure Gospel' with others, who were only preparing high-caste Hindus for lucrative careers, and who, at the same time, were neglecting the plight of the lowly and failing to help such poor people to overcome cultural,

economic, and social disabilities. Officers of the Salvation Army who arrived in the 1880s, while theologically conservative, insisted upon abandoning European lifestyles—in clothes, furnishings, food, and music. They took Indian Christian names and adopted as much of indigenous culture as possible in order to identify themselves with the downtrodden. Pandita Ramabai, the Brahman widow renowned for high learning, after becoming a Christian, turned her back on high society in Britain and America and turned away from those elites with their rationalizing theologies in order to work with helpless child widows and famine-stricken orphans. Among some Catholic and Thomas Christians also, evangelical fervour prompted efforts to bring learning to the poor and lowly.

Conclusion

India today is, after the United States of America, the largest English-speaking and -reading country in the world. Moreover, it not only boasts some of the world's leading newspapers, periodicals, and other publications, as well as an enormous publication industry in English-language works, but also can boast some of the leading literary artists, novelists, and writers. Indeed, English has also become India's fourth classical language (after Sanskrit, Tamil, and Persian). Much of the story of how English achieved a status as the only current continent-wide and all-India-wide language, so that it is the most essential official language of government and business, lies in its acquisition by *mahajan* elites who wished to preserve their dominance. In this effort, the work of the Scottish missionaries—Duff, Wilson, and Anderson—contributed to this elite drive for education in English. There-after, upper-class missionaries, especially those who ran the elite colleges, did much to bring about the establishment of Indian-English as the paramount language of the entire continent.

But the establishment of English in higher education did not take place until conflicts and controversies of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s had been resolved and contentious feelings had subsided. What had evolved from escalating Hindu elite encounters with Christian missionaries, especially during the 1840s and especially in Madras, shocked many and served as a wake-up call to all concerned. Excited feelings epitomized by struggles that occurred reached their climax in 1845–8. These threatened the evolving hybrid culture of elites, the blending of indigenous and alien elements that had been developing in the metropolitan coastal cities of the empire for two centuries. Since none of the constituent elements of this hybrid culture were monolithic—neither Indian elites, nor European officials, nor missionaries, nor Indian Christians—and since each community was itself split on the issue of English education, English itself had become more of a class than a

communal issue. Radical advocates of a state-supported 'national' education wanted to provide basic literacy, practical skills, and moral or spiritual (or ideological) training—in 'mother tongue' vernacular languages—to the widest possible number of people as soon as possible. This happened to be the very aspiration that most missionaries had espoused since the founding of the Tranquebar mission in 1706. But such a notion threatened the privileged positions held by the entrenched 'higher orders'—the *mahajan* elites.

Both missionaries and government officialdom split along these same fault lines. Some European officials, missionaries, and local gentry became alienated by what they saw as the 'uncivil', aggressive, assertive, sometimes arrogant, discourteous, dishonest, unfair, anti-caste, and self-righteous behaviour—the 'un-Christian' behaviour—of radical European missionaries and upwardly mobile Indian Christians whose actions they resented. Other European officials and missionaries and local gentry, especially those with contrary convictions, were alarmed at possible ramifications of a dominant English educational establishment which, by its very existence, would be a barrier that blocked upward mobility. Significantly, since neither side was exclusively either 'Christian' or 'Hindu', 'Native' or 'European', and since polarization would destroy what had previously been a fairly harmonious civic society, many were embarrassed by the public acrimony and by abrasive appeals to 'religion'. As a consequence, the apparent forms of polarization between 'Christian' and 'Hindu' communities gradually melted. Hindu elites were soon attending Christian colleges. The 'Madras Hindu Association' changed its name to the 'Madras Native Association' and, subsequently, to the 'Madras Mahajana Sabha'. Exclusive and select leadership, almost entirely from the ranks of the 'twice-born' or 'clean-caste', predominantly Brahman and high 'non-Brahman' competitors, emerged from elite missionary colleges connected to the new universities. Stellar graduates, from the time of Sir T. Madhava Rao down to Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, fanned out and held sway, not only within upper levels of imperial administration but also within premier princely governments, such as the durbars of Hyderabad, Mysore, and Travancore.

Thus, those Brahmans who had remained silent during many of the ostensibly 'religious' controversies became the main beneficiaries of the English-medium schools and colleges, whether run by governments or missionaries, that became the elite educational institutions of the entire continent. So much was this so that when the non-Brahman movement gained strength in the early twentieth century, one of their slogans was not 'Destroy this British Raj' so much as 'Destroy this Brahman Raj'. Parallel with these state-subsidized elite institutions were systems of education in classical ('Oriental') languages, for traditional elites who continued to explore their ancient heritages, and in vernacular languages, for such 'lower

orders' of people who lived in villages in the vast hinterland. For the most part, the main beneficiaries of such schools were children of converts to Christianity; but when even these kinds of groups tried to avail themselves of access to basic literacy, they were resisted by their overlords, especially those whose power and patronage might be more than enough to intimidate all but the most intrepid, persistent, and resourceful of individuals and their families, whose only other option, after rebellion against *jajmani* controls, was usually to find refuge in some Christian settlement.

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CATHOLIC RENEWAL AND RESURGENCE

By the end of the eighteenth century, Catholics in India faced a precarious situation. Portuguese political dominion of the *Estado da India* had all but vanished for nearly two centuries, having retreated and shrunk until it was relegated to Goa and a few tiny coastal enclaves. French imperial dreams, so grand only fifty years earlier, had all but vanished after the capitulation of their citadel of Pondicherry in 1761, leaving only some scattered agents and mercenary adventurers in Mysore, Hyderabad, and North India most of whose interests were more personal than patriotic. The ascendancy of the British Raj under the East India Company, while not yet altogether assured or paramount in sway throughout the entire continent, seemed more certain with each passing year. The intermittent war between Britain and France, nothing less than a 'second hundred years war' for worldwide supremacy that had encompassed both America and India, had all but cut links between the Holy See in Rome and its distant agencies, dioceses, and missions in India. With political upheavals engulfing both Europe and India, Catholic agencies and institutions in India suffered from disruption, decline, and dissension. The Revolution in France, followed by the Napoleonic Wars and the occupation of Rome, had so weakened papal authority that failing overseas communications and access to funding from Europe had left local missionaries all but abandoned and required local priests, some of them Indians, to fill the void. Many of such priests were only half trained and ill equipped to take heavy responsibilities during such difficult times.

The circumstances faced by Catholics in India, as a consequence, were such that at least four major challenges had to be faced and surmounted simultaneously: first, results of drastic decay, decline, disarray, and paralysis; second, open ecclesiastical warfare between entrenched forces of the *Padroado Rial*, with its seat in Lisbon, and the *Propaganda Fide* (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), in Rome; third, contested relations with Thomas Christians who had never reconciled themselves to the Edict of the Synod of Udayamperur, their loss of autonomy, or domination and over-lordship of European missionaries and priests whose presence and whose Latin rite they deplored; and, finally, fourth, requirements for existence or survival within an imperial world that was at least secular and neutral, if not

also increasingly 'Hindu' in its logic, thereby leaving the Church bereft of that historic support from the state that had hitherto enabled it to shape its own exclusive form of Christendom. In short, new instruments and means had to be devised by which the Catholic faith could face challenges that had never before been encountered, in such a way that it would not only become institutionally established but also be able to expand its evangelization and supporting institutions so that they could encompass the entire continent.

Catholic India in Decline and Disarray

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the very viability and welfare of Catholic communities that had been expanding in India during the previous three centuries were seen as falling into dire jeopardy. Missionaries belonging to Catholic orders who, with considerable de facto autonomy from either Lisbon or Rome, had previously gone forth from monastic and collegial citadels into the countryside, beyond the reach of the *Estado da India*, found themselves abandoned, stranded, and without support, in varying degrees.

No event symbolized such trends more than what had occurred in the wake of the papal suppression of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, in 1773. This action, admittedly taken after two centuries of mounting opposition over what were seen by other orders as radical departures from hallowed elements within Western Christendom, had previously alienated other Catholic institutions throughout the Catholic world. Even so, mounting pressures for suppression, led by the Bourbons, had been ragged, leaving Jesuits in Prussia under Frederick the Great and Russia under Catherine the Great unscathed. In India, on the other hand, the suppression of Jesuit missions and congregations, especially those of Madurai, amounted to an abandonment of the historic crown jewel of Jesuit institutions, and a turning away from the proud legacies of St Francis Xavier, Roberto de Nobili, Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi, and St John de Britto. Abandoned French Jesuit priests who remained in Madurai stayed and worked to the end of their days over two decades later. Other Jesuits, as missionary *sannyasis*, locally known as *swamulus*, continued to wander in remote areas of the Deccan interior, just as they had been doing for several decades.[1] What Jesuits left behind, largely untended after they died out, was substantial: fisherfolk along both coasts, such as the Paravars and Mukkavars, had already turned Catholic as a matter of socio-political expedience almost three centuries earlier, if only as a measure of their defiance of predatory Hindu

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[1] E. R. Hambye, SJ, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. iii (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1997), 329–30.

and Muslim rulers; Jesuit 'Brahmans', such as Roberto de Nobili and Giuseppe Beschi, had established a Catholic presence in Sanskrit scholarship that had spread from Madurai to Dindigal and Coimbatore, as well as Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur; and numbers of other 'caste' people from respectable families, such as Catholic Vellalars, Catholic Reddis, and Catholic Kammas, were to be found scattered in villages and towns along the Coromandel as well as in the inland of the Carnatic.

During these same years, Capuchins who had been allowed into Madras since 1642 and had been running a monastery for over a century descended into a fratricidal spiral of petty squabbles and, in the process, failed in their attempts to aggrandize themselves by appropriating Jesuit properties. In 1787, the Governor of Madras, Sir Archibald Campbell, informed members of his Council that there were over 100,000 Roman Catholic Christians in the area, 17,000 of whom were fisherfolk on the beaches of Madras whose *masula* boats had long handled the off-loading and on-loading of cargoes for ships that were anchored offshore (there being no bay, inlet, or harbour). What concerned him was the fact that, with Capuchins who were French being influenced by the French Bishop in Pondicherry and with French ex-Jesuits 'wandering about India', it was important for Company authorities to keep a close eye on all such peoples within their own domains.[2] Further complicating matters were remnants of a third group of French Catholic missionaries. But, by the early nineteenth century, the Foreign Missions Society of Paris (Missions Étrangères de Paris—or MEP) had only six missionaries in Pondicherry—three of these, including the Bishop, were elderly and infirm and three were novices.

The Padroado–Propaganda *Struggle, or 'Goa Schism'*

In the meantime, the ongoing disputes between the *Padroado Rial* and the *Propaganda Fide* had become so serious that effective ecclesiastical control over Catholic Christians in India often came close to paralysis. Long before this had become so acrimonious and, indeed, ever since 1534, it had been the purpose of the See of Goa and its suffragan diocese of Cochin, Cranganore (Kodungallur), and Mylapore (Mailapur) to be staffed, as much as possible, exclusively by Portuguese prelates and clergy—by right of patronage (or *Padroado*) reserved to the Portuguese Crown. What had brought about this dispute was the action of Pope Gregory XV, on 6 January 1622, by which he

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[2] Kenneth A. Ballhatchet, *Caste, Class and Catholicism in India 1789–1914* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 80.

brought into being the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*.[3] This action represented one of the consequences of reform programmes that had come out of the Council of Trent during the previous century (1559–64). More pointedly, it represented a belated recognition that to have allowed missionary activities under the control of the Portuguese and Spanish Empires had been neither wise nor satisfactory. Without trying to denigrate previous sacrifices made by hosts of earlier missionaries, the Holy See felt a need for more direct reform and supervision. The first secretary of the newly established agency made three reports—in 1625, 1628, and 1644—each of which was strongly critical. These laid out twelve sources of abuse and disorder. At the top of the list was the rise of bitter rivalry between Catholic agencies that had led to open hostility due to their being driven either by the Portuguese *Padroado* or the Spanish *Patronato*—with the monarchies themselves being jealous over their respective 'spiritual' domains. Rather than being vehicles for spreading the Gospel of Christ, missionaries had become agents of European penetration and domination, so that for an Indian to become a Christian convert was tantamount to being seen as a crude, meat-eating, alcohol-drinking, and sexually promiscuous European (*Pfarangi*). Moreover, since converts were obliged to take Portuguese names, such negative consequences were not entirely implausible.

Thus, one of the specified purposes for the creation of *Propaganda Fide* was to enable the sending out of missionaries into areas beyond Portuguese authority who would be answerable directly to Rome—and also, if possible (or at least ostensibly), to create and develop a fully functional Native agency in India. As the pontifical department charged with the spread of Catholic Christianity and with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries, the intrinsic importance of this agency, with its duties, was so extensive, its authority so extraordinary, and its jurisdiction over territory so great that the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda came to be known as the 'Red Pope'.[4] It seems entirely possible that the Edict of 'Diamper' (Udayamperur) two decades earlier, and the resistance it had generated ever after, may have contributed to this action.

While the policy of creating an indigenous priesthood may not have developed as quickly or thoroughly as perhaps was possible, at least initially there were a few instances of such agency. Perhaps the most remarkable of such efforts was the appointment of an Oratorian Brahman Christian of Goa, Matteo de Castro, as a Vicar Apostolic of the newly created Vicariate of Bijapur (Idalcan). Lying entirely beyond the jurisdiction of Goa and outside

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[3] The official title of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* is 'sacra congregatio christiano nomini propaganda'. *Catholic Encyclopaedia*: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12456a.htm.

[4] Ibid.

Padroado control, this effort was not successful. It came to grief precisely because of the determined and persistent opposition of the *Padroado* establishment in Goa, where the Archbishop and local clergy undermined it at every turn and set a pattern for setting at naught the dictates of Rome. Relations between *Propaganda* and *Padroado*, arising out of the Matteo de Castro episode, never recovered and remained disturbed, with few exceptions, ever after. Yet, the Bijapur Vicariate Apostolic itself not only continued to function but extended its sphere of jurisdiction so that it eventually spread, first to Hyderabad and then to the Mughal Durbar.

Despite Portugal's long decline to the point of political irrelevance as a world power and despite a no less apparent flagging of spiritual zeal, the Crown and Church in Lisbon stubbornly kept on clinging to the 'rights of patronage' that had been acquired centuries earlier. In 1642, twenty years after the establishing of *Propaganda Fide*, two years before the third and final report mentioned above, and only two years after the restoration of a fully independent and separate Portuguese monarchy, after it had freed itself from Spanish hegemony, the King of Portugal decreed that, henceforth, no missionaries, especially no non-Portuguese missionaries, would be allowed to enter India (or any Portuguese domain). In pursuance of this policy, in 1649, Ephrem, a Vicar Apostolate who worked in Madras, in the shadow of the Archdiocese of Mylapore, was sent to the Inquisition of Goa. Again, in 1652, the Portuguese *Cortes* (Parliament) refused to recognize the validity of any papal document that was not officially ratified in Lisbon—meaning that no direct appointments or communications with prelates or missionaries in India were recognized. As a consequence, no papal letters for the appointment of Vicars Apostolic were acknowledged that did not first gain royal approval. Yet another decree from Lisbon in 1672 banned any missionary or bishop from entry into India who had not first been vetted in Lisbon and who had not first formally sworn and signed a vow of fidelity to the *Padroado*, both in Lisbon and in Goa. Such requirements for missionary service were attempts to thwart actions of *Propaganda Fide*.

Among the earlier responses of *Propaganda Fide* to such actions were attempts to introduce Catholic missions into European coastal enclaves that were not Portuguese. To that end, as already shown, Capuchins were admitted into Madras in 1642 and allowed to build a monastery; and Carmelites had been admitted into Dutch Cochin in 1663 after the expulsion of the Paulist Jesuits. Similarly, in 1716, negotiations opened between Rome and London, with the aim of transferring control over Catholic churches in Bombay from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa to a Vicar Apostolic. After this event occurred in 1720, Portuguese priests were expelled from the four Catholic churches of Bombay that had been there since before Bombay had been bequeathed to Charles II, as part of the

dowry of Catherine of Braganza. These were turned over to five Carmelite missionaries. The only Goan priests allowed to remain had to submit to the authority of the new ecclesiastical regime. But neither the Archbishop of Goa nor the King of Portugal accepted the action taken by the Bombay Governor, Charles Boone. The *Padroado*, in their view, had been violated. Nor were the Catholic laity and clergy in these Bombay churches able to reconcile themselves to breaking off historic contacts with their 'Eastern Pope'—as the *Padroado* (Archbishop) was sometimes known. No end of conflicts and difficulties continued to undermine the Vicariate Apostolic of Bombay throughout the century that followed. An attempt to set up a kind of 'double government' (or dyarchy) also failed. No one was satisfied.

One possible, if unintended, side benefit to emerge from such local rivalries, not just in Bombay but also in Kanara and in other vicariates apostolic, was for such strife to involve greater numbers of laity in the church life. Another was greater involvement with the secular government of Bombay. This increased after Peter d'Alcantara, an Italian Discalced Carmelite missionary, was appointed as Superior in 1793. Only 33 years old when he started, his tactful handling of complaints from dissatisfied laymen resulted in a steadily increasing number of local churches coming under Roman control. British authorities of Bombay sought to placate the *Padroado* and, at the same time, to retain the services of d'Alcantara, so that there could be a steady supply of Company chaplains for Catholic troops within its military forces. In this they were supported by special actions taken by *Propaganda*. Later, when he was made Vicar Apostolic of Bombay, and of the Great Mughal, d'Alcantara became responsible for the pastoral care of Catholic flocks over a large part of western and southern India. This required him to travel frequently, sometimes as far as Madras, Cochin, and Travancore, to resolve conflicts within various congregations and among clergy. Such was the standing he acquired that, when funds from Rome were blocked by the wars in Europe related to the French Revolution, he was able to obtain a loan from the Bombay government. He even succeeded in getting the East India Company to finance a seminary in Bombay. The Bombay government also granted him a life pension. He remained active in missionary work until his death, at the age of 80, in 1840.[5]

Prior to the 1830s, the very nature and quality of spiritual zeal in Portugal had been radically altered. Changes over the course of the previous 300 years had been capped by the especially corrosive influence of the Enlightenment and the anticlerical movement which it spawned. In the wake of the French Revolution, the Portuguese regime had become infiltrated by

[5] Ballhatchet, *Caste, Class and Catholicism in India*, p. xviii; Thomas Anchukandam, *Catholic Revival in India in the 19th Century* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti, 1996), 23, 49.

secularizing and liberalizing influences, ideologies, and institutions. Changes that had previously contributed, at least in small part, not only to the suppression of the Jesuit order but also to the decline or expulsion of other missionary orders, had also produced a marked decline in missionary manpower, so that it was no longer possible for the *Padroado* to adequately staff ecclesiastical and clerical positions in India with appointees from Europe.[6] Over the long term, this situation, along with increasingly poisonous relations with Rome, brought about further changes in India. First, more and more clerical positions in India were filled with local and indigenous people, many of whom were either Eurasian or from upper-class communities of converts from earlier centuries. This meant that local Christian gentry, both lay and clerical, gained an increasingly vested interest in the holding of clerical positions. Second, also due to this lack of manpower or spiritual zeal from Europe, compounded by the ongoing lack of accord between Lisbon and Rome, suffragan sees in Cranganore, Cochin, and Mylapore remained vacant for decades on end. This situation was further exacerbated when *Padroado* appointments failed to receive proper seals of papal approval from the Vatican. Third, attempts by missionaries sent out to work under vicariates apostolic to move into areas under *Padroado* authority were constantly, if not completely, thwarted. The very fact of their being agents of vicariates apostolic appointed directly by Rome aroused fierce resistance in Goa and Lisbon. Fourth, as a consequence of ecclesiastical paralysis, especially during the decades of war in Europe that went on intermittently between 1790 and 1815, Catholic institutions in India languished and many flocks were left untended.[7] Fifth, a further consequence of these various factors was a movement among some Catholics from upper castes, especially Vellalars who became dismayed with the lack of cohesion among Catholic missions, into congregations being established by Tamil Evangelical Christians. Not a few of the most noteworthy Evangelical Christian families had Catholic roots.

The Consolidation of Catholic Christianity in India

This stalemate began to gradually break during the 1830s. By then, the reactionary climate and establishments of post-Napoleonic Europe had begun to be overthrown and replaced by a more optimistic, reforming,

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[6] Jan Slijkerman, SJ, 'Roothan and the First Novitiate in India of the Restored Jesuit Order', *Indian Church History Review* (*CHAI*) (June 1975), 26.

[7] The oldest Vicariate Apostolic, first at Bijapur (1637), and then at the Mughal (Mogor) Durbar, had been established by the Brahman Oratian already mentioned; the second (1663), run by Carmelites within Dutch-ruled areas, was the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar, at Varāppalli (Verapoly), in the *Serra*.

and revitalizing ethos. A number of new and more vigorous MEP missionaries with leadership potential, who were subject to *Propaganda*, began to arrive in India. The impact of these newcomers was not immediate. Since most of them were sent out by their superiors to work in remote places where the best of them learned local languages and gained a deeper understanding and sympathy for cultural contexts within which the future congregations would need to grow, years would pass before their influence would begin to be felt. At about the same time, the new Pope who ascended to the pontificate understood what was needed and was determined to restore papal authority in India. As Cardinal Cappellari before election, he had been the Prefect in charge of *Propaganda Fide*. As such, he understood the dire straits into which Catholic institutions in India had fallen. The plight of Catholics in India, which he had observed and over which he had pondered for a number of years, prompted him to take a number of resolute actions.

One of the first measures taken by Pope Gregory XVI was to complete the restoration of the Society of Jesus to its former place in India. As early as 1829, the Society had been placed under the direction of Jan Philip (Joannes Philippus) Roothaan. Roothaan, born in Amsterdam in 1785, had completed his noviciate in Riga, one of the last places where the Society had not been suppressed. By the mid-1830s, the new Prefect General had prepared four missionaries for service in Madurai under the leadership of Joseph Bertrand. On 24 October 1837, after an absence of sixty-four years, Jesuits landed in India, two of them reaching Madurai early in 1838. In the face of opposition from local *Padroado* forces, and jurisdictional difficulties with Pondicherry over Thanjavur, they struggled and eventually succeeded in reopening the New Madurai Mission. Thereafter, at the constant urging of Roothaan, the New Mission concentrated on locating, recruiting, and then training gifted young Indians for service as Jesuits. The Noviciate that was established in Madurai during the years that followed would eventually become one of a growing number of springboards for such an enormous expansion that, by the turn of the twenty-first century, no single country in the world would have as many devout, dedicated, disciplined, well-educated and -equipped Jesuits as India.[8]

The second measure taken by Pope Gregory XVI, and continued by Pope Pius IX, was to establish new vicariates apostolic within both *Padroado* provinces of Cochin and Goa—and also in Madras (1832), in Bombay (1833), in Calcutta and Ceylon (1834), in the Coromandel coast (1835), and in Pondicherry and Madurai (1836). Into these ecclesiastical domains, he either elevated able missionary priests already on the ground, such as

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[8] Slijkerman, 'Roothan and the First Novitiate in India of the Restored Jesuit Order', 23–54.

d'Alcantara in Bombay; or he introduced altogether new elements, such as Daniel O'Connor who, with five other Irish priests and two student priests (novices), was sent to Madras to take over from the troublesome Capuchins—a measure it was hoped would draw further Company stipends for service as chaplains to Irish soldiers within local cantonments. In each of the new vicariates apostolic, authority over local *Padroado* congregations was challenged.[9] Establishing new dioceses within already existing ecclesiastical domains of the *Padroado*, agencies that would be answerable only to *Propaganda Fide*, was an important event. The history of Catholics in India, after many decades of neglect, immediately took a new turn. The *Padroado* interpreted the actions of these two pontiffs as having been inspired and organized by partisan *Propaganda* supporters in India, as well as by the Sacred Congregation in Rome. Clergy and laity in Goa, seeing their positions threatened, rose up in opposition, often claiming the directives being sent from Rome were forgeries (a ploy that they had often previously employed). *Padroado* prelates and people in other dioceses—Cranganore, Cochin, and Mylapore—also rebelled. As might have been predicted, the papal assault upon the *Padroado*—with actions from *padroadists* provoking counter-actions from *propagandists*—brought about a period of extreme turbulence within all Catholic structures in India.

In an attempt to end this turbulence, Pope Gregory XVI put into action yet another decision that was no less historic than the first two. In a brief entitled *Multa praeclare*, signed on 24 April 1838, he publicly asserted the supremacy of Rome over all Catholics in India, including all those, whether people, priests, or prelates, who were under the *Padroado*. Henceforth any area within the Diocese of Mylapore not yet assigned to a Vicar Apostolic would automatically fall under the jurisdiction of the Vicariate of Madras. New vicars apostolate were sent to Coimbatore, Mysore, Pondicherry, and Vishakhapatnam. Still others were added later until, by the end of the century, there were seventeen dioceses. At the same time, neglected parishes within the jurisdictions of Cranganore and Cochin were brought under the authority of the Vicariate of Malabar. Henceforth, only vicars apostolic and they alone would be recognized by Rome as true prelates, regardless of all papal bulls that had been promulgated in previous centuries. Finally, even the Archbishopric of Goa itself was deprived of any authority outside Goa.

Of course, it was one thing to make pronouncements and quite another to implement them. Centuries of experience among 'country priests' had taught *padroadists* to perfect sophisticated skills, already well known in villages of India, of delay and obfuscation. Papal authority could be affirmed and declared and repeated in Rome; but local prelates and priests could

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[9] Ibid. 99–106.

attempt to corrupt and undermine each and every action of the *propagandists*. By devices that had been successfully utilized in the past, *padroadist* forces were able to temporize and deflect and feign incomprehension. By means which they had used in earlier times, they hoped to outlast this Pope and successive popes until the time came when they could 'turn' some later successor.[10]

What further complicated matters for the papacy at this time was the fact that, ever since 1834, diplomatic relations between Lisbon and Rome had been broken. As a consequence, 'Archbishop-Elect' Dom Carvalho circulated a pastoral letter from Goa repudiating *Multa praeclare*. While claiming that it was a forgery, he also indicated, in apparent contradiction, that it had most surely been 'extorted' from the Pope by means of 'trickery and falsehood'.[11] Simultaneously, Dom Antonio Texeira, the Archbishop of Cranganore (aka ancient Kodungallur) who later became prelate of Mylapore, took steps to do and say much the same. Finally, in 1843, two years after diplomatic relations had been restored, Queen Dona Maria nominated Dom José Maria Silva y Torres as Archbishop of Goa. But no sooner was her appointment finally confirmed by the Pope than the new Archbishop launched a series of attacks upon *Multa praeclare*. By the time Archbishop Silvay Torres had been recalled, Pope Gregory XVI in 1846 had died and negotiations again stalled. Even Pope Pius IX who then ascended the Holy See failed to stop the feuding contestants. In his brief of 1853, entitled *Probe nostis*, Pius IX condemned the schism to little effect. Another pact known as the Concordat of 1860 also failed to bring disputes to an end.

Meanwhile, during all these years of constant and bitter discord, one vicar apostolic after another found greater success in turning to officials of the Raj for redress. The Raj, after all, had the power to enforce any decisions that emerged from disputes that came before its courts. As had been the case throughout their history, local Catholics had an ability to show the traits of a chameleon, so that they could play off one party against another while their own local leaders were able to retain their own strength within areas ruled by the Government of India. Nevertheless, while many minor disputes were settled in local courts, and occasionally even through negotiations between the Holy See and Portugal, repercussions of ecclesiastical animus would continue to bedevil relationships in many areas, especially in Bombay, until the middle of the twentieth century. Numbers of Catholics in that metropolitan city had to suffer, often needlessly, from ceaselessly

[10] Robrecht Boudens, *Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony: Successes and Failures in Ceylon, 1796–1893* (Immensee: Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionaire, 1979).

[11] Thomas Anchukandam, SDB, *Catholic Revival in India in the 19th Century*, i. 269–316. Appendix III, 'The Brief *Multa praeclare*' contains the full Latin text of this decree.

acrimonious disputes between defenders of the *Padroado* and champions of the *Propaganda*.

No single missionary prelate during the nineteenth century did more to champion the recovery of Catholic fortunes in India than Clément Bonnand. As Bishop of Pondicherry and Vicar Apostolic of the Coromandel coast, he made strenuous efforts to bring about essential changes. Having spent his earlier years gaining considerable field experience among high-caste Kamma Telugus in Pirangipuram (Guntur district), he was fluent in Telugu and Tamil, understood nuances of local culture, and was well versed in Indian affairs. Most importantly, he had not only learned how to get along with officials of the Raj, both British and Indian, but to exploit the legal institutions of the Raj to the benefit of Rome. Like Bishop d'Alcantara of Bombay, he fully recognized the need for coming to terms with secular authorities. Beyond the nasty struggles going on between *Padroado* and *Propaganda* over the *Multa praeclare* decree, he could see that Catholics in India needed to strengthen their inner structures so as to build consensus, cohesion, and discipline. Most of all, he recognized the urgent necessity of developing a Native Indian clerical agency as much as possible, if Catholics were to successfully cope with the non-Catholic world around them.

Bishop Bonnand was fortunate to have three highly gifted, if sometimes irascible, colleagues in Étienne Louis Charbonneau, Melchior de Marion Brésillac, and Felix Onésime Luquet. These missionaries not only shared many of his views but, each in his own way, furthered the cause of Catholic renewal and restoration. All four believed fervently in the need for stronger Native agency, with all the educational infrastructures required to bring this about. All also believed in the need for a careful demarcation of the whole continent into dioceses under a strong hierarchy. Bonnand had the foresight to recognize that such changes could only be accomplished by means of one or more major conclaves or synods. To this end, he sent out formal but graciously worded personal invitations to each and every prelate and priest in the country who was under direct Roman authority. Included among invitations sent far and wide were all vicariates apostolic, missionaries from different orders, and influential lay Catholics. He asked all Catholics to join him in coming together for a time of common worship, fellowship, and thorough, unhindered discussion concerning what each thought were the most burning and central issues that they all faced.

The problems he listed were formidable. He wanted his fellow Catholics to face structural anomalies that existed between rival jurisdictions, problems of trying to build a stronger Native clergy, problems of trying to provide for better pastoral care, problems of building schools to provide literacy for children so that there might be more seminaries for the training of local priests, problems of attempting to evangelize peoples of India in the

face of what were perceived as mounting threats from, or 'sheep stealing' by, 'heretical' forces of Evangelical (Protestant) missionaries, and strategies for dealing with secular authorities, especially those relating to how to approach the British Raj. With all these matters on the agenda, the First Synod of Pondicherry lasted four weeks, from 18 January to 13 February 1844.[12] This conclave set the tone for further consultations. Successive synods eventually led to a rational consolidating of structures.

Behind the Synod that Bonnand organized and called into being was the assistance, as well as the energy and insights, of two recently arrived fellow missionaries, Melchior de Marion Brésillac who had arrived in 1841 and Felix Onésime Luquet who arrived a year later. These two individuals were close friends. It seems that Luquet, being more politic, succeeded in over-coming apathy and persuading others at the Synod to accept Brésillac's ideas regarding the need for Native clergy and for the promotion of vocations for indigenous Christians.[13] Unfortunately, despite Bonnand's success in get-ting Brésillac appointed to implement such new initiatives by taking charge of the newly established Vicariate Apostolic in Coimbatore, Brésillac was so hurt by mean-spirited and nasty treatment of some older missionaries that he resigned and returned to Europe in disgust. Bonnand's other colleague, Felix Luquet, was sent to Paris and Rome to explain the entire programme for renewal set forth by the Synod of Pondicherry. In this task, Luquet was very successful; but, in the process, he also stirred up such animosity and resentments in India by his writings that he decided not to return to India.[14]

Such was the approbation of the Synod and trust reposed in Bonnand by *Propaganda Fide* and the new Pope, Pius IX, that he was assigned an enormous task of touring all of India in order to lay out a series of proposals for how new dioceses might be demarcated. The task was so exhausting that, while he sent valuable reports, he himself died before his task could be completed; and Charbonneau had to finish the work and write the last report. This reported that in many of the vicariates visited—namely, Hyderabad, Vishakhapatnam, Calcutta, Dacca, Patna, and Agra—not a single Indian priest or missionary was to be found. While Bonnand's far-sighted recommendations were not immediately carried out, what he had set in motion was a process that eventually led to the formation of the Catholic hierarchy of India.[15] On 1 October 1885, Pope Leo XIII promul-gated the bull *Humanae salutis*. This finally and firmly laid the foundations

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[12] Thomas Anchukandam [SDR], *The First Synod of Pondicherry, 1844* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1994).

[13] Ibid. 70–9.

[14] Thomas Anchukandam, 'General Division of the Indian Missions into Vicariates Apostolic: Luquet's Role and Subsequent Controversies', *ICHR* 32: 2 (Dec. 1998), 77–94.

[15] Anchukandam, *Catholic Revival in India in the 19th Century*, i, ch. 7, 374–454.

for the establishment of an Indian Catholic Church. The significance of this momentous event for the future of Catholicism in India can hardly be exaggerated. Under this papal decree, six archdioceses were created—in Agra, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry, and Verapoly. Ten dioceses were also created—in Allahabad, Cochin, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Krishnagar, Mysore, Pune, Quilon, Tiruchirapalli, and Vishakhapatnam. Beyond these sixteen units, Patna remained as a Vicariate Apostolic. Thus, the full hierarchy as it was constituted in 1886 consisted of seventeen ecclesiastical sees, all of which were under the direction of *Propaganda Fide*. Two further sees—the Archdiocese of Goa and the Diocese of Mylapore—still remained under the authority of the *Padroado*.[16]

During these same years, and especially after the hierarchy was in place, foundations were laid for building perhaps the single most comprehensive educational system in India, one which stretched from village schools to institutions of higher learning, for training a Native Indian clergy and for scholars and secular professionals who could compete within an English-speaking Indo-British world. The capstone of this system was the establishment, in 1894, of a papal seminary in Kandy, Sri Lanka. In 1950, three years after the Independence of India had been achieved, this seminary was transferred to Pune. This system for producing an indigenous priesthood for the Indian hierarchy was so successful that it was eventually to accomplish what almost no other Catholic hierarchy accomplished so well—namely, the production of a surplus of Catholic priests, missionaries, and scholars. By comparison, the Church in Latin America, perhaps due to the Portuguese *Padroado* and the Spanish *Patronato*, was never able, even a century and a half after achieving independent status, to divest itself of its colonialistic European clergy. Yet, notwithstanding the process that began in the later nineteenth century to make this possible, there is also a certain irony in the fact that, during the absence of Europeans and *Propaganda* at the end of the eighteenth century, it was the *Padroado* in Goa that had also led the way in promoting the formation of an Indian clergy. Between 1761 and 1811, Goan Registers of Ordination recorded 2,058 ordinations, with another 1,049 being recorded in the half-century that followed. Thus, after the suppression of the Jesuits, indigenous clergy, admittedly largely Goan, had come into their own and had filled the vacuum left by Europeans. As staunch *padroadists*, this indigenous clergy defended itself against returning European missionaries. The increase of their numbers under *Propaganda* was partly a result of a number of them being recruited out of the ranks of *Padroado* clergy.[17]

[16] Http://members.tripod.com/-Berchmans/latin.html.
[17] Achilles Meersman, OEM, 'Can We Speak of Indigenization of the Catholic Church in India during the 19th Century', *ICHR*, 7: 2 (Dec. 1973), 75–90.

No institution in Catholic India exemplified this amazing expansion as much as the Jesuit order. This expansion, over the century and two-thirds since its return to India in 1838, was to be so extremely rapid that they soon became, in many ways, the predominant Catholic presence throughout the continent. So much was this to be so that, today, no country in the world has produced so many Jesuit priests—3,851 (the USA, with 3,635, comes next). Madurai alone, now with some 495 Jesuits, continued to remain the predominant centre. Not a single major city of India would be without its own strong Jesuit presence. Jesuits would become the instrument by which many Roman Catholic institutions would be forged into a sharp-edged instrument of Vatican power that was second to none in the world. Without this instrument it is doubtful that Catholics could have become not only the largest Christian community in India, but perhaps also a community brimming with highly dedicated and highly trained Indian priests and scholars. This, of course, could never have happened without first dealing with, and then bypassing, the dissension that came out of Goa and Lisbon.

Perhaps the other most constructive initiative undertaken by Bishop Bonnand was his helping the Catholic Church to come to terms with the British Raj. Like Bishop d'Alcantara before him, he could see that the tense relations between Rome and Lisbon were already often driving lay Catholics to seek redress from non-Catholic regimes. Indeed, there were historical precedents for this in other parts of the world. For centuries, vicariates apostolic, with sees that were labelled 'in partibus infidelium'—'in a place of infidel [Muslim] rule'—had often dealt with non-Catholic rulers in other times and places. Carmelites of Malabar had gained concessions from the Dutch in Cochin. In turn they had gained the same from the British in Bombay. Jesuits and Missions Étrangères had long also dealt with non-Catholic rulers of Madras, Madurai, and Mysore. Increasingly often, Catholics, clergy and lay people alike, were beginning to take their disputes over caste, property, or priests to the British. Catholic disputes that could be settled by courts and governments of the East India Company no longer needed to worry about interventions from authorities in Goa, Lisbon, or Rome.

By the nineteenth century, the British themselves also no longer worried about malignant influences coming from Portuguese, Dutch, or French institutions, or about Catholics undermining their political stability at home in Britain. After Catholics in England had denied any further dependence upon the temporal authority of the Pope within the United Kingdom, and after they had convinced the British public of their patriotism and loyalty to the Crown, passage of the Catholic Emancipation (Relief) Act (1829), only one year after repeal of the Test Acts (1828) relating to Dissenters, rendered them eligible for public offices, both within the United

Kingdom and throughout the British Empire. Heavy Irish immigration into Britain and to far-flung dominions was itself turning Roman Catholicism into simply another kind of denomination. Thus, once the Vatican began to appoint English-speaking Irish vicars apostolic, and once disputes and encounters between *padroadist and propagandist* prelates or priests that occurred within its territories were subject to civil litigation, the Raj itself accepted responsibility for adjudicating 'civil' conflicts. Moreover, the Raj also 'devised a Protestant-style principle to the effect that a change of ecclesiastical affiliation or jurisdiction was possible if and when a majority of the people within any local parish wanted it. When such proposals prompted official investigation, the Company—or the Crown after 1858—was frequently involved in dealing with the internal affairs of the Roman Catholic Church.'[18] In short, Catholic institutions and missionaries within the Indian Empire, like any other non-British missionaries, flourished in India as never before. Having no illusions or pretensions to being part of ecclesiastical, or imperial establishment, they could carry on with the expansion of their programmes 'beneath the radar' of official sensitivities, where they often went unnoticed. As a consequence of these circumstances, Catholic expansion throughout India was both dramatic and unprecedented in its ultimate sweep and sway. But, even as this began to occur, they had to return to one set of unresolved problems that, since the Synod of Udayamperur in 1599, had never been fully or properly addressed. This, like the 'Great *Padroado–Propaganda* Schism' (or so-called 'Goan Schism'), could only be evaded and escaped for so long.

Conflicts with Thomas Christians

The establishment of a single Catholic hierarchy of India in 1886 did not go down well with Thomas Christians who, in one way or another, had come under the sway of Roman Catholic dominion. Two Catholic communities in particular, each part of the much larger community of Thomas Christians which had refused to become Catholic, struggled for autonomy and for the preservation of their own ethno-cultural legacy. One was known, among various names, as the Syro-Malabar Church; and the other was known as the Syro-Malankara Church. While all Thomas Christians who traced themselves to ancient times had also been called 'Malabar' Christians, they were known by this name in order to distinguish between them and three other communities of ancient 'Thomas Christians', some of whom had never originated in India. These were the Thomas Christians of Edessa (in

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[18] Ballhatchet, *Caste, Class and Catholicism in India*, 5.

'Syro–Malabar' and 'Syro–Malankara' Christians who submitted to Catholicism without ever submitting to the loss of their ecclesiastical autonomy or their rite, than did Placid J. Podipara.[20]

For Thomas Christians, the story of attempts by Catholics, either under *Padroado* or under *Propaganda*, and then later, after 1653 but especially between 1663 and 1710, under the double government of both *Padroado* and *Propaganda*, is a long and unending tale of misgovernment, bitterness, tyranny, and woe.[21] This was compounded by a papal policy of 'divide and rule'. Both the Chaldean (or Babylonian) Patriarchate—of Mesopotamia or East Syria—and the Malabar Church of India had been split during the late sixteenth century, one branch (Saluqa) being used by Rome against the other branch, so that Chaldean prelates sent to India were being captured, expelled, imprisoned, or done to death by Portuguese forces under *Padroado* authority. After Mar Abraham had been accused of heresy by the Council of Goa, after he died in 1597, and after Dom Francis Roz had been put in his place after the Synod of Udayamperur, Thomas Christians lost their last legitimately appointed Chaldean (Syrian) *metran*. Archdeacon George had then fought by means of rearguard and subversive actions against the Latin prelates being imposed from the West. Later, in 1652, the secret apprehension of Mar Ahattallah in Mylapore and the suspicious circumstances of his death while in the custody of *Padroado* officials had been the last straw. Some sources suggest that he may have been drowned while the ship carrying him was at or near Cochin.[22] Others assert that he was destroyed by the Inquisition of Goa, where he was burned at the stake. Archdeacon Thomas, as the then Administrator of the Thomas Christian Church of Malabar, had rallied all who were unhappy with Latin rule to join together—first at Edapilly, and then at Koonen Cross, Mattancherri, on 3 January 1653, and again at Alanghat on 22 May 1653. At Koonen Cross, the assembly of priests (*kattanars*) and people formally stood before a crucifix and lighted candles and solemnly swore an oath upon the Gospel that they would strive, henceforth, to restore their ancient Church to its former full independence and that they would no longer obey Francis Garcia (SJ) or any other prelate sent by the *Pfarangi* Church of Rome.[23]

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[20] Placid J. Podipara, CMI, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Alleppey: Prakasar Publications, 1976); and *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute for Religious Studies [St Thomas Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam 686010], 1979), No. 31.

[21] Thomas Pallipurathkunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church (1663–1716)* (Always: Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1982).

[22] George Milne Rae, *The Syrian Church in India* (Edinburgh: William Blackburn and Sons, 1892), 260.

[23] Jacob Kollaparambil, *The St. Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653* (Kottayam: The Catholic Bishop's House, 1981).

With this action, a schism occurred which forever separated the until then undivided Thomas Christian community. At the beginning, most remained with the old Archdeacon who, after his elevation at Koonen Cross to the position of *Metran*, took the title Mar Thoma I and added such ancient titles as '*Metran* of All India', 'Gate of India', or simply '*Metran* of India'. His followers became known as the 'new party' (*Puthankuttukar*), as distinct from the 'old party' (*Pazhayakuttukar*), the name by which the Catholic party became known. A decade later, the 'old party' consisted of those who remained within the Catholic fold after the Dutch conquest of Cochin and after the expulsion of the 'Paulist' Jesuits in 1662. By virtue of an agreement negotiated in Amsterdam, the Dutch permitted 'old party' Catholics to be placed under the 'guidance' of the Carmelites and allowed them to keep Mar Alexander Parampil (aka Alexander de Campos) as Vicar Apostolate. He soon also designated himself as '*Metran* of All India' and 'Gate of India'. Yet, when he then tried to follow the older traditions of ecclesiastical succession, by designating his nephew as the Thomas Christian Coadjutor who would succeed him, the Carmelites stopped him from doing so. Upon his death in 1687, *Propaganda* appointed a Latin, Carmelite prelate to rule over all Catholic Thomas Christians.

Meanwhile, during these same years, when the Carmelite prelate not only excommunicated Mar Thoma I and the entire 'new party' community, but also effectively blocked his attempts to gain support from the Chaldean, or East Syrian, Patriarch, Mar Thoma I turned to the Patriarch of Antioch. In 1665, the Patriarch sent Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem to help him. Thereafter, Mar Thoma I and his successors permanently turned away from the patriarchs of Babylon and submitted to *Jacoba* Patriarchs of Antioch, then residing at Diarbekr in West Syria. Thus, for the first time in history, a Monophysite or *Jacoba* Church became established in India. This Church, as we shall see, later broke apart into several separate Churches. But, at the core of this community, after it too split, were some who would later return to a Roman allegiance and become the Syro–Malankara Church (see below).

Struggles for an 'Autonomous' Syro–Malabar Hierarchy[24]

Unhappiness among Catholic Thomas Christians at being ruled by Carmelite missionaries often led them to the verge of rebellion—something that had almost happened during the half-century when they were ruled over by 'Paulist' Jesuits, such as Dom Francis Roz and Dom Joseph Garcia. On

[24] Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, traces the convoluted history from the first bishops, Kepha and Paul, by tradition appointed by St Thomas himself, down to the present.

several occasions, they sent delegations to Rome and to Lisbon in order to break free. On more than one such occasion, bitter feelings reached a boiling point. After the suspicious death of Mar Kariattil while in Goa en route back from Europe, an assembly of outraged representatives from eighty-four churches was convened in 1787 by his travelling companion, Paremakkal *Kattanar*. This assembly drafted a decree, known as the *Ankamāli Padiyola*, which censured missionaries, accused them of murder, and demanded that Catholic Thomas Christians be given back their own 'Malabar Rite' and their own *Metran*. Moreover, this declared that none other but Paremakkal *Kattanar* should take the place of the deceased Mar Kariattil. When their words went unheeded, they sent a delegation to the Chaldean Patriarch. But here again, their efforts were thwarted by the circumstance that Chaldean Patriarchate was itself divided and subverted by a succession struggle.

At this point, the power of Rome to influence Malabar was itself thwarted. The wars and tumults in Europe following the French Revolution all but cut off contacts. As numbers of European missionaries dwindled, Thomas Christians were largely left to fend for themselves. As much as possible, they strove to revive their ancient traditions. But, by 1852 and 1853, the same old troubles erupted. Two petitions were sent—one to the Patriarch, requesting a new *Metran*, and one to the Pope, requesting the same. When the thirty-nine priests who appealed to the Patriarch were suspended by the Vicar Apostolic, they threatened to become part of the *Jacoba* Church if their pleas were not heeded. When another petition signed by thirty priests reached *Propaganda Fide*, Catholic Thomas Christians not only pleaded for the restoration of their own Syriac rite but also asked to be given their own 'autonomous' Syro-Malabari bishops and hierarchy.

Shortly after this, a Chaldean cleric named Denha Bar-Yona arrived on the Malabar coast and began to generate enthusiasm for a return of Catholic Thomas Christians to the Eastern rite. With support from local *malpāns* (instructors) and *kattanars*, he advocated a return to direct Chaldean intervention in the affairs of Syro-Malabarian churches. Supporters went throughout Kerala gathering signatures. In 1859, the pro-Catholic Chaldean Patriarch, Joseph VI Audo, also appealed to the *Propaganda*, asking that two non-Carmelite officials be sent to investigate the situation in Malabar. Denial of his right to consecrate *metrans* for Thomas Christians, he argued, was an infringement upon the ancient authority of his Church. When Rome took exception to his words and told him to stop interfering with its Church in India, he went ahead anyway; and, in 1861, he ordained a Chaldean *metran* named Mar Thomas Bokkos. Mar Bokkos was then informed that neither the Patriarch nor he had any rights in Malabar and ordered to withdraw forthwith. When he refused to do so, he was

summarily excommunicated. In 1874, the Patriarch sent yet another *metran* to India by the name of Mar Elias Mellus; and still another, named Mar Jacob. These newcomers succeeded in weaning away thirty-four churches (thirty from *Padroado*, two from *Propaganda*, and two other Latin/Romo-Syrian churches). When these prelates returned to Chaldea a few years later, the sizeable following they left behind was placed into the hands of Mar Thondanat Antony. Mar Antony, another local *kattanar* who had often gone back and forth to Mesopotamia in order to gain support from the Chaldean Patriarch, became so exasperated by Latin Catholic attempts to thwart his authority that he turned to the non-Catholic ('Nestorian' or 'Orthodox') Patriarch and received consecration under the title of *Metran* Mar Abdiso.

This event seems to have been a wake-up call to authorities in Rome. They began to realize that petitions continuously flowing from Catholic Thomas Christians to Rome, begging for their own rite and their own episcopy, were being blocked and thwarted by the Carmelite missionaries. Realizing that the Malabar Christian countryside, during the late nineteenth century, was continuously being ravaged by ecclesiastical unrest, and efforts from Rome were being stubbornly resisted, they finally acted. On 24 March 1876, orders were given for a non-Carmelite Apostolic Visitor, Leo Meurin, to make an 'impartial' investigation. When Meurin, who was Vicar Apostolic of Bombay, arrived, he was immediately presented with what became known as the *Mannanam Petition*—a document signed by 136 priests—asking for a separate and autonomous Syro-Malabar *metran* to function alongside two already existing European vicars apostolic. But this proposal, included in the Visitor's report, met with such resistance that another Visitor was unofficially sent to look into the matter. When this new investigator, Ignacio Persica by name, also came back with much the same report, suggesting that, at the very least, there should be a 'ritual' division, a decision was made to do something. No kind of territorial division would be possible since there had been such an intermingling of people. What was decided was that a special Carmelite missionary would be named Coadjutor Bishop to the Vicar Apostolic. He was to serve as a Syro-Malabar Vicar General, with specific responsibility for administering *both* rites and for devoting himself exclusively to the welfare of Syrians. To assist him, he was given four *kattanars* whose task was to serve as consultants. This scheme was initiated in 1877.

In 1886, after incessant attempts to extract Syro-Malabar (Thomas Christian) communities from the grip of the *Padroado*, a Concordat was reached, on 23 June. By then, after nearly ten years, it had become abundantly clear that the 1877 scheme was a total failure. Neither a special Vicar General nor four Syro-Malabari Consulters had ever been appointed. Thus when, on the 1 September 1886, the Catholic (Latin) hierarchy of India came into being,

some dioceses had no more than 10,000 communicants. At the same time, enormous numbers of Thomas Christians, who were still petitioning more insistently than ever, were left without any proper consideration. After centuries of degradation, humiliation, and injustice, something had to be done. In December, a Delegate Apostolic to India (Cardinal Pones) who was concerned with the issue of forming a Syro–Malabar hierarchy, reported to the Pope: 'From all that has been declared so far, Your Eminence will understand that till 1865 A.D. the Sacred Congregation showed itself, if not opposed, at least hesitant to grant the petition of the Syrians of Malabar for an Indigenous bishop; it must however be said that until that time the only information available was based on the reports of the Carmelite Fathers and the Vicar Apostolic. Msgr. Meurin and Msgr. Persica were the first to allow us to know the state of things in a manner independent of the Carmelites . . .'[25]

Finally, a break for Catholic Thomas Christians came. In 1894, Pope Leo XIII, by the papal brief *Quod iampridem*, an action following after the encyclical *Orientalium dignitas*, decreed that a ritual separation of Syriac from the Latin rite for Syro–Malabar Catholics should take place; that two separate vicariates apostolic be appointed, with a Syro–Malabari Vicar General appointed for each who could exercise the Syriac rite; and that four clerical consultants of the same rite be appointed to assist in the administering of this rite. The two vicariates apostolic established for the Syro–Malabar Catholics in 1887, but never implemented, were to be brought into actual being and were to be located in Trichur and in Kottayam. Adolf Meddlycott, an Anglo-Indian, and Charles Lavinne were appointed to serve in those two positions respectively. Even so, while these two prelates did much to promote the welfare of Thomas Christians, the appointment of persons who were not themselves Thomas Christians failed to remove the humiliation or the legitimate desire of Catholic Thomas Christians to have bishops from among their own people appointed for administering their own rite.

This grievance continued to simmer and surfaced again in 1896. At that time, another ecclesiastical reorganization occurred. Under the papal brief *Quae rei sacrae* of the same Pope, this consisted of the creation of three, rather than two, vicariates apostolic for Thomas Christians—to be located at Trichur, Ernakulam, and Changanacherry. But even this action was not smoothly implemented. When the Delegate Apostolic, Ladislaus Zaleski, publicly indicated that he did not think that it was opportune to let Native Thomas Christians have a bishop (*metran*) of their own, 196 irate and by now increasingly nationalistic Thomas Christian *kattanars* sent a petition to the

[25] Mathias Mundadan, CMI, '19th Century "Autonomy" Movement among Syrian Catholics', *ICHR* 8: 2 (Dec. 1974), 124–8.

Patriarch of Babylon, Mar George Ebed-Jesus Quyyah, asking for him to come and help them to have their own Church in Malabar and that it be attached to the Chaldean Patriarchate. Two months later, after further discussions within the Sacred Congregation, the Pope decreed that the three vicariates apostolic were to be entrusted entirely to Native Thomas Christians—namely, to Mar John Menachery, Mar Louis Pazheparambil, and Mar Mayhew Makil. At long last having their own indigenous Syro-Malabar *metrans*, it was only a question of time before, after further pressure from below, a full-fledged and semi-autonomous Syro–Malabar Catholic hierarchy would be set up. The spectacular growth enjoyed thereafter by the Catholic Thomas Christian community under its own indigenous *metrans* was soon noticed and appreciated in Rome. This became evident when Pope Pius XI, on 21 December 1923, issued the papal bull *Romani pontifices*, by which Ernakulam was raised to the status of a full archdiocese, with Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan dioceses. By an action executed a year later, on 16 November 1924, the pallium was bestowed upon the *Metran* of Ernakulam, Mar Augustine Kandathil. The Syro-Malabar *Metran* was given the privilege of wearing the Roman pallium, in accordance with liturgical laws, as a symbol of his 'autonomous' metropolitan authority along with his dependence upon the Holy See. In 1934, the same Pope set in motion a process of liturgical reforms with the purpose of restoring the original 'Oriental' or Syriac rite which, by that time, had become much corrupted by numerous Latin elements which had crept in over the previous 300 years. As a consequence of these changes, and the autonomy initiated thereby, there was a resurgence of internal revival. Numbers of Syro-Malabar, Thomas Christian Catholics multiplied rapidly. What had been a community of roughly 200,000 Thomas Christian Catholics in the 1870s has become one of the most flourishing and most promising of all Catholic Churches, the second largest Eastern Catholic Church in the world, with a population that now may soon reach four million souls.[26]

Further struggles seem to have subsided. By 1969, the second Archbishop of Ernakulam, Joseph Cardinal Parecattil, became the first Thomas Christian Cardinal. By 1977, the Holy See was beginning to establish Syro-Malabar dioceses throughout the length and breadth of the continent, doing so regardless of whether or not Latin-rite dioceses already existed in the same places. Until 1992, there was no single head of the Syro–Malabar Catholic Church. Instead, there were two metropolitan archdioceses, one in Ernakulam and one in Changanacherry, each being of equal rank and

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[26] Francis Kanichikattil, *To Restore or to Reform? A Critical Study on Current Liturgical Renewal in the Syro-Malabar Church in India* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1992). Reviewed in *Studica Canonica*, 29 (1995), 547–53.

status. On 16 December 1992, by the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori*, Pope John Paul II came to India and raised this Church to a new level—as a Major Archepiscopal Church. By *Acta apostolicae sedis, 85 [1993] 398–399,* he appointed Cardinal Anthony Padiyara of Ernakulam-Ankamāli as the first Major Archbishop, and Archbishop Abraham Kattumana, as the Pontifical Delegate. After the death of Kattumana in 1995, all authority became vested in Cardinal Padiyara. When he retired in 1996, Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil was appointed Apostolic Administrator, as a temporary arrangement (somewhat reminiscent of the ancient role of Archdeacon), but with the powers of the Major Archbishop. Ernakulam-Ankamāli has remained, as from ancient times, the see of the Major Archbishop. The Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference has now been replaced by the Synod of Bishops. This first met on 23 May 1993. This autonomous see, as one of the two largest Eastern Catholic Churches in the world—the other being in the Ukraine— has even gone so far as to request that patriarchal status be granted to it. With its twenty-six dioceses, with five archdioceses, it serves over three and a half million Thomas Christian Catholics. With thirteen dioceses, and most Catholic Thomas Christians still located within the state of Kerala, and with another thirteen dioceses located outside Kerala, the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church seems finally to have come into its own.[27] Yet, there are still some restless souls who feel that the ancient Syriac rite will not have been fully restored until the Syro-Malabar rite is abandoned in favour of its earlier Indo-Chaldean predecessor.

Today, according to an official website, there are some 3,677,000 Catholic Thomas Christians within the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, a total of 3,138 parishes looked after by roughly 3,500 eparchial, or diocesan, priests and 2,200 'religious' (monks bound by monastic vows). Religious sisters number about 30,000 and religious brothers around 980. In addition, there are some 2,400 seminarians. All of these, in one way or another, are employed within structures of a system that runs 180 colleges, 3,821 schools, 262 ecclesiastical institutions, 581 medical institutions, 445 technical institutions, 917 charitable institutions, and 1,031 other miscellaneous institutions. One consequence of this expansion is that there is such a surplus of priests and religious workers that they are exported to meet Catholic needs and shortages in Latin America, North America, Europe, and far corners of the world.[28]

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[27] http://www.katolsk.no/utenriks/kronolgi/orient_ryo_malabar.htm. This site contains the names of all of the dioceses, with the dates of their creation: 'Chronology of Catholic Dioceses: The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church'.

[28] 'The Syro-Malabar Church', http://members.tripod.com/-Berchmans/malabar.html. Also see: 'History of the Syro-Malabar Church', http://www.thesyromalabarchurch.org/history.htm. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 193.

Struggles for Autonomous Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Hierarchy[29]

What this story has so failed to follow is what happened to other branches of Thomas Christians. Among other groups of Thomas Christians who became Catholic but who also remained unhappy were some of the descendants of highly exclusive 'Malankara' Christians. Jewish Christians (from 'Kanayi', near Babylon, Mesopotamia), aka 'Southists', they had broken away from Latin Catholic, *Padroado*, or European (*Pfarangi*) 'colonial' dominion in the 1653 revolution. In order to understand what happened to them after their rebellion against the Catholic Archbishops of Goa, Cochin, and Cranganore (Kodungallur), it is useful to again look backward and recapitulate details of what happened before and after taking part in the Oath of Koonen Cross.[30]

In 1641, forty-two years after the great disruption caused by the Synod of Udayamperur, struggles over Syrian and Latin ecclesiastical forces and liturgical forms which had never ceased erupted with greater fury than ever. Refusal of those loyal to the Church of the East to submit to dictates from the Church of the West entered a new phase with the rise of two new figures. The new Archdeacon, named Thomas, challenged the new *Padroado* Archbishop of Kodungallur (Cranganore), named Francis Garcia (SJ). Each claimed that the other could do nothing without his consent. Garcia also claimed that Thomas was secretly corresponding with several patriarchs. The very words used—Copt, *Jacoba*, and Nestorian—were Catholic epithets for describing a heretic. Thomas claimed that every attempt to correspond with the Catholic Chaldean (East Syrian) Patriarch was being thwarted by Garcia and by Portuguese forces at his command.

The incident that brought conflict into open confrontation was the Ahatallah Affair. Ahatallah, hailing from the West Syrian Church of Antioch and claiming to be the 'Patriarch of All India and China', arrived in Mylapore at the behest of the Coptic Patriarch. His very presence in India aroused great excitement among the Thomas Christians and alarm among *Padroado* authorities. After Manoel de Leira (SJ) sent secret information about him to Portuguese officials, they apprehended him and put him aboard a ship bound for Cochin and Goa. When the Archdeacon, backed by armed forces, arrived in Cochin and demanded to see the 'Patriarch', the Portuguese claimed that no such bishop was allowed to come to Thomas Christians without prior approval of the Portuguese Crown and that Ahatallah was a 'Nestorian' heretic and an intruder. Without letting Archdeacon Thomas see Ahatallah or his credentials, they claimed that the ship had

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[29] Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church* (Always: Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1973).

[30] Kollaparambil, *The St. Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653.*

already sailed for Goa. As word leaked out that Ahatallah had actually been drowned off the coast of Cochin even before the ship could sail away, outraged Thomas Christians assembled at Mattancherri, not far from Co-chin. Here, as previously mentioned, they formally tied a rope to an ancient stone cross that stood in the open air that was known as the 'Koonen Cross'. Here, as all together stood holding onto the rope, they swore a great oath that they never again would allow themselves to be subjected to rule by Catholic prelates from Europe, especially by 'Paulists' (i.e. Jesuits).

This oath sworn on 3 January 1653 reflected deep bitterness provoked by the forced and stealthy removal of Ahatallah, which was blamed on the haughty conduct of Archbishop Garcia. The incident dashed dreams of a restored ecclesiastical authority and an autonomous Syriac rite. It also provoked the final and irrevocable storm of rebellion that had been slowly gathering strength for over a century. Despite many attempts by Catholic prelates to bring all who had rebelled back into their fold, many followers of Archdeacon Thomas decided to go their own separate way. Never before, despite manifold internal differences of caste and style, had Thomas Chris-tians, as a whole, been divided. Once and for all, Koonen Cross irrevocably broke this unity. As mentioned, Archdeacon Thomas, having been elevated to High *Metran* by the laying on of hands by twelve *kattanars*, took the title of Mar Thoma I.

A decade later, after Cochin fell to the Dutch, Jesuit missionaries were expelled. The arrival and welcome, in 1665, of Mar Gregorios, the *Jacoba Metran* of Jerusalem, by Mar Thoma I, and the turning of the Malankara Church to the *Jacoba* Patriarchate of Antioch—following failure to break free from Roman Catholic dominion and failure to gain access to the Patriarchate of Chaldea—cannot be understood without again recalling the origins of Monophysitism as it had emerged out of the Christological controversies of the fifth century. This theology, linked to the name of Eutyches, an Egyptian monk whose views were condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, was mingled with murky politics between feuding patriarchates. Resuscitated during the reign of Emperor Justinian by another monk named Jacobus Zanzalus, aka 'Baradaeus' (or 'man of rags'), it was championed by Sergius, a Patriarch of Antioch, in West Syria. After his death in 578, 'Jacoba' became the name attached to Antiochene Mono-physitism. But this Patriarchate should not be confused with three other patriarchs who claimed the same title—namely, the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, who occupied the throne of St Peter and St Ignatius and later resided in Damascus; the Patriarch of the Maronites whose monastery was on Mount Lebanon; and the Roman Catholic 'Anti-patriarch' who resided in Aleppo. *Jacoba* Patriarchs of Antioch lived in Diarbekr on the Tigris, or at a monastery near Mardin, in what was then Armenia (northern

Mesopotamia). By the seventeenth century, this Patriarchate claimed authority over five metropolitan bishops (Diarbekr, Mosul, Mardan, Aleppo, and Jerusalem). It was more famous for its manifold and highly ornate liturgies than for heavy theology, a proclivity shared with most Thomas Christians.

The arrival of Mar Gregorios in Cochin and his welcome by the Malankara Church occurred twelve years after Mar Thoma I's election as the first indigenous prelate, and shortly after his suffering excommunication by the Carmelite Vicar Apostolate, Joseph Sebastiani. Once Mar Thoma I had been consecrated and joined to the Patriarchate of Antioch, Mar Gregorios himself stayed on in Malabar as joint ruler over the newly formed *Jacoba* Malankara Church. This joint rule, lasting twenty years (when they both died), made permanent the 'vertical' split between Malabar Christians linked to Rome and Malankara Christians linked to Antioch (in Mardin). Those of the 'new allegiance', known as *Puthankuttukar*, were led by *metrans* who looked to the *Jacoba* Patriarch of Antioch in Mardin. Those of the 'old allegiance', known as *Pazhayakuttukar*, looked to Rome. The irony of these names lies in the fact the so-called 'new' were, in reality, the older Orthodox Church of the East, while the so-called 'old' were in reality the newer, Catholic imposition upon Thomas Christians. In any case, while Thomas Christians thereafter remained one community in cultural and ethnic matters, they were split down the middle in ecclesiastical and ritual matters. Yet, those who were Catholic never became fully reconciled to the loss of their 'Eastern', 'Malabar', or 'Syrian' heritage, connection, or rite. Most of all they wanted their own fully autonomous and ethnically distinct bishops and clergy.

A century later, when Mar Thoma V questioned the necessity of receiving consecration, however indirectly, from Mardin, he was scolded for daring to place the mitre upon his own head. In 1761, following time-honoured matrilineal traditions of having one's nephew (sister's son) as one's 'Heir Apparent' (*Anandaravan*), he raised his own nephew to *Metran* as Mar Thoma VI. This he did even though he himself did not die until 1765. Five years later, in 1770, when Archdeacon (*Ramban*) Kattumangatt challenged the legitimacy of this title, Mar Thoma VI went to the trouble of getting his ordination as *Metran* of the Malankara Church legitimized by the *Jacoba* Patriarch of Antioch. The Archdeacon then separated himself from Mar Thoma VI and, taking the title *Metran* Mar Kurillos (Cyril), established the 'Independent *Jacoba* Church of Malabar'. Mar Thoma VI, under his new title of Dionysius I, governed the Malankara Church for nearly thirty-eight years. Being a person of considerable ability and influence, he enjoyed such autonomous authority that he was sometimes referred to as 'Dionysius the Great'. During these years, he engaged in spasmodic negotiations with

the Catholic Church. But both *Padroado* and *Propaganda* responded to his overtures with suspicion. *Kattanar* Kariattil Joseph, the delegate whom he sent to Rome in 1782, was not welcomed. He died in Goa four years later, before he could get back to Malabar. About this mission, his travelling companion, Thomas Paremakal, wrote a saga entitled *Vathamanapustakom*. Rebuffed again in 1799, Dionysius I turned his back on the Catholic Church for good. What may have prompted his efforts was a dawning realization of the weakness of his Church and its need for internal reform. This sense of need undoubtedly explains his welcome to Claudius Buchanan who, on behalf of the British Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, formally paid him a visit in 1806. Out of this meeting, as mentioned in Chapter 9, came links with the Church Missionary Society (CMS). This alliance, for the reform and revitalizing of the Malankara Church, lasted for thirty years, until 1836. Further splits followed, eventuating in the emergence of the Mar Thoma (Evangelical) Church and a smaller splinter Church that remained with the CMS.[31] (The thirty years of alliance between Anglican missionaries and Malankara prelates—three successive High *Metrans* with the same name—need not be repeated here.)

The only other significant Malankara *metran* was Mar Athanasius Matthew. He was the first Malabari native ever to be directly and personally consecrated by the *Jacoba* Patriarch of Antioch. After training in the (CMS) College of Kottayam and further study in Madras, he went to Mardin and lived in the Patriarch's house for seven months. The commission (*staticon*) he received in 1842 proclaimed his worth as a deacon, as a *kattanar* (priest), as a *ramban* (archdeacon), and as the spiritual father of his own people. His rule, lasting until his death in 1877, was not free from anguish. Years of struggles followed. The old High *Metran*, Mar Cheppat Dionysius, wrote to the Patriarch, charging that he had been duped by Matthew. The Patriarch sent Mar Kurilos to make enquiries. But Mar Kurilos no sooner arrived than he produced documents by which he claimed the same position. Not until 1852, after nearly a decade of litigation, did the royal commission appointed by the Raja of Travancore pronounce Mar Kurilos's document a forgery and proclaim Mar Athanasius Matthew to be the true *Metran*.

Nevertheless, even while the *Metran* carried on his duties, further challenges against him were mounted. The first came from a Mar Athanasius Stephanos Episcopa. This prelate, also armed with a letter from the Patriarch, demanded access to various Malankara funds and disturbed local congregations until the state's minister (*diwan*) took action against him. Not until 1857, when the Company's Court of Directors in London

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[31] Rae, *The Syrian Church in India*, 273–80; 281–3.

reaffirmed their 'absolute non-interference in religious matters', did Mar Athanasius think he might reign in peace. But, again in 1865, someone claiming descent from the ancient Palamattam family of hereditary clerics also sent to the Patriarch at Mardin and got himself appointed as *Metran* of Malankara, under the title of Mar Dionysius Joseph. He too received no recognition from the Raja's government. At this point, in order to preserve his many reforms and protect the Malankara Church, Mar Athanasius Matthew took steps to checkmate any further challenges. At a formal conclave attended by thousands and supported by a neighbouring *metran*, Mar Kurilos, he pronounced his cousin Thomas to be his successor (*anandaravan*) and then took the precaution of making a will so that, in case of his death, his cousin could immediately become both *Metran* of Malankara and *Ramban* (Manager/Archdeacon) of all church property.

The final and most brazen challenge was a direct assault upon Malankara property mounted by the Patriarch himself. In order to leave no stone unturned, he first travelled to London and, after ingratiating himself with the Archbishop of Canterbury, tried to get the British government to pronounce on his behalf. This came to nothing after Anglican bishops sent wires refusing to lend any credence to the Patriarch's claims. The frustrated Patriarch then went directly to Travancore. Arriving in early 1875, he stayed in India until the end of 1876. During that time, he accomplished three things: first, a decree declaring that no previous action of the state precluded courts of law from deciding upon his rights to church property or powers of appointing or removing officers. Second, he convened a caucus of local clergy at Mulanthuruthu in June of 1876. Dignified by the name of 'synod', 'His Holiness, Maran Mar Ignatius, Peter III, Patriarch on the Apostolic Throne of Antioch and Holy Father of Jacobite Syrians of Malankarai', presided. He then branded Mar Athanasius Matthew with the title 'Belial' (Belial) and declared that, since the state's *Sarkar* had previously dismissed him (which, of course, was a bald lie), the Patriarch was also dismissing him from the Church. He went on to draw up resolutions. These bound every parish to: (1) register all title deeds in the name of the Patriarch; (2) draw up lists of all families and their elders (*karanavar*); (3) form an association called the Syrian Christian Association with himself and future patriarchs as patrons, and future *metrans* as presidents; (4) appoint a secretary and cash-keeper, instead of letting the previous committee (eight out of twenty-four being priests) collect and control all money (*raisa*) due to the Patriarch; and (5), finally, empowered Mar Dionysius Joseph, as president, henceforth to carry on all litigations and collect all funds necessary for that purpose from the Church. The practical effect of these proceedings was to invest Mar Dionysius with power of attorney to act on behalf of Malankara Christians in any forthcoming litigation. The Patriarch then

divided the whole of the Malankarai into seven dioceses, in honour of the seven original churches of Malabar planted by the Apostle Thomas, placing Mar Dionysius Joseph in charge of the Church of St Thomas at Quilon, and ordering six *metrans* he appointed to henceforth obey only him. He even took care to claim the Kottayam Seminary and 'all general matters in the whole of Malayalam'.

Eventually, the Patriarch's own brazen conduct became so outrageous and his greed so insatiable that even Mar Dionysius Joseph himself, having originally invited him to the country, was unable to control the situation. As a consequence, more and more Malankara people became permanently alienated, not just from the Patriarch but from the would-be *Metran*. It seems that one of the last straws was the Patriarch's attempt to disinter the bodies of prominent church figures in hopes of finding buried treasures. Thus, by the time he departed for Mardin, there was general relief throughout the community.

Only half a year later, Mar Athanasius Matthew himself died. What he had accomplished, despite so many challenges, was quite remarkable. Malayalam prayers were being said and Scriptures were being read weekly from each pulpit at regular worship (*qurbana*) services. Invocations to saints or deference to relics were being banned. Bible classes, Sunday schools, popular preaching, and various forms of evangelistic work among non-Christians were bringing respect to the Church. Last of all, as he lay dying, he insisted that he should not be buried in a sitting position. The coffin, which he himself had ordered, was lowered into an open grave within the graveyard of the Maraman Church, beside the grave of his uncle, the famous *malpān* and founder of the reformation among Thomas Christians—the person who had inspired his own career. Considering his training under CMS missionaries, it would not be inaccurate to describe him as having been an 'Evangelical' or 'Protestant' High *Metran*, at least in doctrine and in spirit.

Of course, matters did not end there. Mar Dionysius Joseph was determined to succeed to the position vacated by Mar Athanasius Matthew. To that end, he and his descendants mounted a process of litigation against Mar Athanasius Thomas. That prelate quietly and quickly slipped into the shoes of his cousin and began to handle all responsibilities, both spiritual and material. Athanasius Matthew's trust properties became the focal point of suits against him. During the ten years that followed, a number of strange things occurred: charges of heresy were put before a Brahman judge, Ariananaygam Pillai. In the end, both sides agreed that two conditions would decide the dispute: (1) evidence of proper consecration; and (2) evidence of acceptance by the Malankara Christians. But since Thomas Christians in general, and the Malankara Church itself, had never possessed

any written Code of Laws, the court could only resort to what it called 'use and wont', along with whatever historical evidences might be available. None of what was dug up, by either side, turned out to be worth very much. The two Brahman justices did their best, going into sources tracing events back to earliest times. Since the Malankara Christians had not been linked in any way to the *Jacoba* Patriarch prior to the seventeenth century, and since during the last two centuries the practice had been for each *metran* to be consecrated by his predecessor, so that this had been the most common rule, precedents had been established which were far removed from Antioch. On the second condition also, matters were not entirely clear. Since the hereditary office held by the Palamattam family had been extinct for over a century, consecrations had been confirmed by a royal proclamation from the Raja enjoining the duties of obedience to each newly installed *metran*, according to the customs of the community. But what actually happened as a consequence of the decision of 1876 was that a new process was set in motion—namely, the establishing of legal precedents for 'judge-made law'. The question of when the community had first acknowledged Mar Dionysius as *Metran* was answered mainly by reference to prior utterances made by Mar Dionysius himself. In any event, the self-interested pleadings of a cleric on his own suit sufficed. Mar Dionysius V was placed upon the episcopal throne of Malankara by the state of Travancore.

During this entire period, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, one can see that the Malankara (Orthodox) Churches remained in a state of constant tension. They were suspended between the Catholic Church, on one hand, and the *Jacoba* patriarchate of Antioch in Mardin, on the other. This situation was further complicated by intrusions from the Patriarchate of Babylon/Chaldea. After Mar Thomas Bokkos came to Malabar from the Chaldean Patriarch in 1861 and after actions he took led to his excommunication, yet another schism occurred; and when Mar Elias Mellus arrived from Mesopotamia in 1874 and met the same fate, his followers also formed a separate group. Members of this separatist group became known as the *Serais*. As such, they acknowledged the primacy of the Orthodox (so-called 'Nestorian') Chaldean Patriarch who was by then settled in Thrissur.

In 1909, after Mar Dionysius VI became *Metran* of Malankara, the *Jacoba* Patriarch of Antioch, Mar Ignatius Abdalla II Satuff, made a visit to the Malabar coast. But when he tried to impose his authority over the whole Malankara Church of Malabar, the *Metran* allowed him to exercise no more than ceremonial and liturgical power. He could consecrate lesser bishops (*metrans*), *kattanars*, and bestow unctions of sacred oil (*chrism*), but he could exercise no other powers. Matters came to a head on 31 May 1911, when the Patriarch of Antioch excommunicated Dionysius VI. As on previous

occasions, this action did not succeed. Precedents were cited to argue that the Malankara Church had always been autonomous.[32] Mar Dionysius then appealed to Mar Abdul Masih, the rival Patriarch of Antioch, who was in Takrit. This Patriarch, after declaring the excommunication hurled by Patriarch Abdullah to be null and void, came to India himself and formally installed Dionysius VI as *the* 'Catholicos of Malabar'. Henceforth, he was to be in control of a completely autonomous see, totally free from any Antioch Patriarch.

As a result of this schism, the Malankara Church broke into two factions: the *Metran Kakshi* led by Mar Dionysius VI; and the *Bava Kakshi* led by Mar Kurilos, the *Metran* whom the Patriarch consecrated to rule over this group. One consequence of these Byzantine involvements was that two Orthodox Thomas Christian Churches emerged: the *Metran Kakshi*, known as the 'Malankara (Syrian) Orthodox Church of India' and the *Bava Kakshi*, also known as the 'Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church (of India)'. Each of these communities now has over a million followers.

Meanwhile, relations between the newly formed Catholicate of the Malankara (Orthodox) Church and the Patriarchate of Antioch (in Takrit) continued to deteriorate, especially after yet another *Metran* arose who was determined to bring about a reunion with the Catholic Church. In 1926, at the Episcopal Synod at Parumala, an assembly of unhappy Malankara *metrans* authorized Mar Ivanios, the *Metran* of Bethany, to enter into negotiations with Rome with a view to bringing about a reunion with the Catholic Church. Mar Ivanios, founder of a revival movement called the 'Order of the Imitation of Christ', sent an unofficial memorandum to the Holy See. In it, he laid down only one condition for reunion—namely, that the ancient and sacred rites and traditions of the Malankara Church be preserved and kept intact.[33] This condition was accepted by Pope Pius XI. The newly consecrated and recognized Syro–Malankara Catholic Archbishop, together with his following, were duly received into the Catholic Church on 20 September 1930. Less than two years later, on 11 June 1932, a papal decree entitled *Christo pastorum principi* brought into being the constitutional structure of a completely separate Malankara hierarchy, with Mar Ivanios as Metropolitan Archbishop of Trivandrum (Tiruvanthapuram), and Mar Theophilus as suffragan *Metran* of Thirvalla. (The Metropolitan See of Mar Ivanios became a functioning reality on 12 March 1933.) This declared that: 'The juridical status of the Catholic

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[32] Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 66–8. Note: the excommunication of Dionysius VI in 1826 had no visible effect whatsoever; and the *Metran* continued to rule until 1845. The excommunication of Mar Athanasius Matthew had the same result.

[33] Ibid. 122 ff.

Malankara Church [was], therefore, to be understood against this background of the independent and autonomous nature of the Malankara Church before the reunion.'[34]

Thus it was that, by an intricate process of Byzantine splits and schisms, the Catholic Church of India acquired a third hierarchy. This new and also 'autonomous' hierarchy, together with all due privileges and rights pertaining thereto, with its own liturgy and customs linked to the ancient rite of Antioch, and with its own separate and full administration, reflected a remarkably creative departure for the Catholic Church. As such, it reflected a new kind of Catholic flexibility. One of the compromises that accompanied this merger was an acceptance of the already existing married clergy, along with a request that henceforth all future clergy would remain celibate. For its part, the Syro-Malankara Church agreed to accept a few of the customs and laws that belonged to the Latin rite. In due course, the Syro-Malankara Church, with its metropolitan archdiocese located in Tiruvanthapuram, supported by two suffragan dioceses at Thirvalla and Sultan Battery, consisted of 300,000 followers, 500 priestly clergy, five further *metrans*, and some 1,200 men and women as religious workers. In the meanwhile, as early as 1911, the Vicariate Apostolic of Kottayam was created, exclusively for those Knanaya Malankara Thomas Christians who had previously been of the Syro-Malabar rite.[35]

Conclusion

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the map of Catholic India was not only comprehensive, but almost complete: Catholic India held twenty-eight bishops, twenty-five being concentrated within the Madras Presidency.[36] But, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the ecclesiastical map would be vastly expanded.[37] Within three separate hierarchies, there were at least twenty-seven metropolitan archbishops and two semi-autonomous major-archiepiscopal archbishop-patriarchs. These exercised ecclesiastical authority over 152 units, of which 126 were dioceses presided over by

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[34] Ibid. 72.

[35] Ibid. 258–60—appendices I, II, and III list the successions of five categories of Malankara prelates: bishops (or archbishops) from 1930; Malankara metropolitan (*metrans*) from 1653; catholicos of the Malankara Church, from 1912 onwards; Antiochene prelates in Malankara, from 1665 to 1962; and Antiochene patriarchs in Malankara, from 1875 to 1965. The intricacies of these relationships are not going to be unravelled further.

[36] Ballhatchet, *Caste, Class and Catholicism in India*, 5.

[37] Data from website of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India: http://www.cbcisite.com/Churchinindia.htm.

local bishops—121 of the Latin rite, 26 of the Syro-Malabar (Syriac) rite, and 5 of the more exclusive Syro-Malankara (Syriac) rite.

Indeed, the Catholic Church of India has now become the largest, most comprehensive, and best-organized ecclesiastical structure in the continent. Among its congregations are, at the very least, sixteen million, and probably many more, communicants and followers. Moreover, in more recent times, especially since revolutionary changes brought about by Vatican II, these have been lumped together under the term 'Church *sui juris*'. Thus, within a worldwide framework of six rites (i.e. Roman, Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean, and Byzantine/Constantinopolitan), the Catholic Church of Rome has recognized the existence of twenty-two separate and autonomous Catholic Churches, most of which are located within the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In all of the Eastern Churches, however, substantial numbers of congregations and followers still do not come directly under Roman Catholic authority. The primacy of Rome has always been challenged and is often disputed by the ancient patriarchates of the Orthodox 'Church of the East'. Nevertheless, no historical understanding of Catholic Christians of India has been possible that did not deal with the byzantine complexities of Syrian (or Syriac) rite Catholics.

Ongoing Conflicts over Caste

Perhaps the biggest and the most ceaseless and continuous of all ongoing arguments and conflicts, bringing about divisions and mutations among almost all Christian groups in India, regardless of whether they were Indians or Westerners, Catholics or Evangelicals, Anglicans or dissenters, Mar Thoma or Syrian, conservative or liberal, has continued to swirl around issues of caste and culture, ethnicity and 'acculturation'. Since it is difficult to find any time in the history of Christians in India when this was not a burning issue, this both remained and still is *the* enduring problem for *all* Christians in India. It is one which has never gone away. It is something that still arouses acrimonious dissension and strife. Its dimensions, both historical and theological, are mingled with intricate permutations which do not go away. Every single Christian community which has ever existed in the continent, and certainly every community discussed within this chapter, still continues to exist—including many that have not yet been considered. Moreover, none has become extinct. Some can be found that exist in a somewhat fossilized form. Many more, however, have become resurrected in some altogether revitalized new form. In theological terms, issues of unity and diversity (universality and pluralism) have persisted. A polarity of seemingly endless and paradoxical contradictions have coexisted. In historical terms, challenges of acceptance within dynamic and expanding notions

about the meaning of humanity have coexisted, at the same time, with concerns over causing damage or bringing about outright rejection of various specific cultures and communities.

Ongoing and yet changing attitudes toward caste and/or ethnicity within Catholic congregations have been a continuous concern. In both theological and historical terms, caste was more than a simple matter of birth (*jāt*). It was also a matter of culture. Two Vellalar Christians of Thanjavur previously mentioned, one a Catholic and one an Evangelical, crystallized the central question: How could a Holy and Just God offer a single salvation that applied to all of a single, worldwide humanity and do so within the languages of manifold cultures? For Muttusami Pillai and Vedanayakam Sastriar, there was no such thing as a 'Christian' in the abstract. Each Christian and each community of Christians was knowable only in concrete and specific terms. Each was understood in relation to specific traits of language, birth, culture, education, style, and taste—no two of which were the same. In holistic terms, primordial mankind was such an abstraction, as were stories of origin, and explanations of birth and caste.

Seen in practical terms, each Christian was linked by worship to a rite, at the centre of which was the Eucharist. In India, caste was linked to concerns with pollution. How could different peoples partake of the same elements separately? How could 'spiritual unity' coexist within such diversities that allowed different people to live separately and to organize themselves hierarchically according to distinctions of caste or class? European Christians sat on benches, 'caste' Christians sat on grass mats, and 'casteless' Christians, such as Paraiyars or Shanars, sat on the bare ground—each community according to its circumstances of birth and condition. None of these concrete circumstances were to be seen as immutable. In such matters, Roman Catholic missionaries also were not of one mind. Caste observances and practices had differed among Indian Christians in previous centuries. French missionaries along the Coromandel were more ready to respect existing caste customs; Irish missionaries, reflecting a later age, were much less tolerant of caste; and Italian missionaries tended to fall somewhere between. Old controversies over caste continued to persist, sometimes going back several centuries, even over the Latin and Malabar (as well as Chinese) rite. Pope Benedict XIV, in 1744, held that Catholics of high and low birth alike should participate in the same mass, take the same communion, and meet in the same building, at the same time. Jesuits in South India erected little walls and opened different doors for the high and the low castes. Thanjavur Christians arranged for different castes to sit in separate quadrants of nave and transept. Slave Christians in America worshipped in their own chapels, just as servants in Europe sat in side galleries. In problems over training clergy, rival Catholic jurisdictions—whether *Padroado Rial* or

Propaganda Fide—tended to favour separate castes. Thus, for example, Mukkavar fisherfolk petitioned Rome for their own bishop. How was it possible for the first Pope to have been a fisherman and, at the same time, for them not to be considered worthy enough for clerical training and ordination, much less having their own prelate? One Apostolic Delegate, in 1902, pointed out that, while virtually no direct descendants of Roberto de Nobili's Brahman converts still remained within the Church, many were the descendants of Paravars and Mukkavars taught by St Francis Xavier who remained faithful. If anything, problems of caste and culture seemed to become more and more formidable with each passing century.

Ongoing Conflicts over Church Authority

The Roman Catholic Church continued to struggle with the anomaly of the *Padroado* all the way down to the twentieth century. That the Portuguese should continue to have any ecclesiastical authority after India gained its Independence became unthinkable. Thus, in due course, while elements of this anachronism were gradually whittled away, it was not until the last Portuguese Bishop of Cochin retired in 1952 that some animosities between high-caste and low-caste Christians were resolved: two dioceses were formed, with a bishop of appropriate birth for each. Further 'Indianization' of the Catholic Church revolved around three principal themes. The first was how to implement the decrees of the Second Vatican Council (1962–5), thereby encouraging adaptation and pluralism especially in relation to the liturgy. The high point here was the All-India Seminar at Bangalore, Pentecost 1969. Yet, the implementation of its resolutions became bogged down in fears that Indianization might be mistaken if it looked too much like 'Hinduization'. The second issue was the often fraught relationship between Latin-rite Catholics and Catholics within the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara rites. The latter, in some ways, represented some of the most dynamic communities within all of Indian Catholicism. Yet, it was only in 1987 that Pope John Paul allowed them to expand their diocesan organizational structures outside their original Kerala homeland. The third theme was the development of Christian ashrams, something pursued also among some non-Catholic Christian communities. In this matter, one path to follow was blazed by the example of Jules Monchanin, by Abhisheka-nanda, and by Bede Griffiths. Particularly significant also was Francis Acharya's founding at Kurisumula, Kerala, of an ashram combining a Cistercian pattern of life with the Syro-Malankara rite.

   Finally, no discussion of the renewal, revival, and resurgence of a continent-wide Catholicism would be complete that did not deal with processes of continuing expansion, by means of both evangelization and

education, through which the Catholic Church moved into remote corners, reaching new peoples who had never before been reached with the Gospel. This required coming to terms with the existence of a world, first within the Indian Empire and then within each of those nations that succeeded the empire, that was at least secular, if not 'Hindu', 'Islamic', or 'Buddhist, in its political logic, thereby often leaving the Church bereft of that support from the state which, historically, had enabled the Catholic Church in other countries of the world to shape and control its own destiny and its own exclusive forms of Christendom. How this process unfolded, partially outside the Catholic Church, and especially among *sa-varna* or 'caste' peoples, as well as among *adivāsi* (aboriginal) or tribal peoples, will be touched upon, to some degree, in the next chapters.

13

'TROPHIES OF GRACE' AND
THEIR PUBLIC INFLUENCE

There seem always to have been, at least by tradition, Christians in India of high birth, high caste, high class, and high culture, if not of high wealth. Some Thomas Christians claimed to be of ancient Brahmanical lineage. Some 'Malankara' Christians of 'Southist' or 'Thomas Knaniya' lineage claimed pure Jewish Christian descent tracing themselves back to ancient Mesopotamia. Some of the more recent converts to the Christian faith came from backgrounds and cultures that held highly privileged status, regardless of whatever egalitarian doctrines they might have personally espoused. Such persons were *varna* as distinct from *āvarna* Christians—'clean' (*shuddam*) as distinct from 'unclean' (*āshuddam*), polluting or 'untouchable'. Birth accorded them 'truly' or 'purely' clean (*sa-varna*) rank. They came from the opposite end of the spectrum of purity from those who were born untouchable. While a substantial number of Christian converts during the nineteenth century were high-caste non-Brahmans, such as Vellalars or Kamunas, these were people whom Brahmans had long categorized as mere 'Sudras' or worse. Much fewer were the number of Brahman Christians. Their number may have been even smaller than that of converted Muslims or Sikhs (not to mention Buddhists, Parsis, or Jains).

Nevertheless, there were some Christians whose very birth, not to mention accomplishments, made them so important and prominent that they can be called 'Trophies of Grace'. A 'Trophy of Grace', within this context, can be defined quite arbitrarily as having possessed at least three noteworthy features: (1) high birth and high class; (2) conversion that was understood, at least doctrinally or theologically, as having been due to divine rather than human agency; and (3) celebrated status, due to personal accomplishments, that stretched far and wide across the world during their own lifetimes, if not later. In trying to gain a historical understanding of individual elite Christians or 'Trophies of Grace' during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a number of approaches are possible and a number of possible questions arise. While a number of elite Christians of modern India, especially those who may be identified historically as prominent leaders,

belonged to, grew out of, or represented some existing Christian commu-
nity, these were not 'Trophies of Grace', as defined here. Rather, 'Trophies
of Grace' won considerable renown, both in the continent and overseas,
mainly if not exclusively as individual converts whose very high birth and
accomplishments and influence combined to attract special attention. In-
deed, many of them can be seen as a kind of 'one-off' or unique phenom-
enon whose long-term influence could not be identified with any particular
community so much as with particularly remarkable contributions. These
were individuals who belonged to a newly emerging 'public' in India, a
continent-wide phenomenon that had previously never existed, except
within the constricted confines of dynastic or monastic or village contexts.
In short, wide visibility made these 'trophies' into symbolic figures. For
Christians in India, as well as for Christians overseas, such individuals could
be seen as 'Trophies of Grace'. One's response to each such trophy
depended upon one's own culture, one's ethnicity, and one's more deeply
felt spiritual condition. The most saintly of Christians and, by definition
also, the most humble and sensitive, merely rejoiced in what they thought
that God had done, and was doing, in the lives of certain select and unique
individuals—if only to multiply and spread divine blessings to all human-
kind. Less 'sanctified' attitudes among Christians could run the gamut from
pompous pride to ridiculously simplistic notions about what such individ-
uals might represent.[1]

   For an overview of this kind of historical phenomena, two strategies are
being employed. The first, taking up most of this chapter, is a long, more
detailed study in depth of a single person who, however tiny in physical
stature, became a giant, and, no less importantly, the only careful glance at
an Indian Christian woman within this entire work. The second is a series of
brief narrative vignettes that, by dint of their very brevity, run the danger of
superficiality—to the extent that, as particular 'Trophies of Grace', they
might seem like entries in a biographical dictionary of distinguished Chris-
tians. This, of course, is exactly what each of these notable converts was.
Each, coming from the highest levels of society, was unique in a special way.
Almost all were Brahmans who came either from Bengal or from Bombay.
As such, none of them were elite Christians who emerged out of upper-class
Christian communities, but individuals who rose to prominence within
wider non-Christian societies and then attracted attention, both in India
and around the world. This wider public attention as high-class (*sa-varna*)
converts is what made them 'Trophies of Grace'. These were each
unique also for some special legacy that was never quite the same as might

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[1] Hannah Fenichel Pipkin's classic, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles:
University of California Press, 1967 [1972]).

have been expected from some of the other Christian leaders of modern India.

It is this very close concentration upon just a few individuals, and especially upon the remarkable life of a single woman, that puts this chapter into an entirely different, and admittedly very odd position in comparison with every other chapter in this book. Indeed, undoubtedly there are other ways to handle a subject such as is contained here. Nevertheless, focusing attention upon what many might feel was one of the very greatest women in India's history provides a lens for understanding Christianity in India.

Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: The Mahatma of Mukti

No single word so epitomizes Ramabai's life as the term *Mukti*. *Mukti*— Liberty or Freedom (or *Moksha*, also 'Release' or 'Salvation')—is the name she gave to the mission she built at Kedgaon. Emblazoned on its newsletter, the *Mukti Prayer Bell*, was the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. Its ringing challenge, 'Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the inhabitants Lev. XXV. X', symbolized her life and work. A lifelong quest for *mukti* marked stages in her conversion. Conversion, whether viewed as a single event or as a series of events, marked the course of spiritual encounters that were pivotal turning points in her quests for more.

Early Life and Lessons on the Pilgrim Road

Ramabai Dongre was born on 23 April 1858, high atop Gangamal, in mountains not far from Mangalore. Six months later, her parents forsook their forest retreat (*ashram*) to embark on a never-ending 'pilgrimage' that lasted her twenty years, wandering on foot across the whole continent for thousands of miles. Her immensely learned father suffered for daring to teach Sanskrit to his wife in violation of the *Manusmriti*. Having impoverished himself providing hospitality to students (*sishiyas*), he took his family on a lifelong pilgrimage to famous shrines, subsisting on the generosity of those who listened to his recitations. The enormous treasure in Sanskrit learning accumulated in the storehouse of his memory dazzled and amazed. Ramabai's earliest memories were of trudging and camping along roadsides or of listening to the sacred sounds of the 'divine language' as Sanskrit classics were being recited in gateways or under trees at renowned pilgrim sites by members of her family. Her father and mother provided her with truly remarkable gifts—and exposed her to much suffering.

Anant Shastri Dongre, a Chitpavan Brahman born in 1795 and a disciple of the famed Ramachandra Shastri Sathe in Pune, had dedicated himself to educating women and suffered for doing so. After retiring from service to

the Maharaja of Mysore, he had gone on a pilgrimage to Varanasi, and lost his first wife along the way. There, while studying the *darshan shastra*, he had turned away from the Shaiva (*Ādvaita*) tradition to embrace the Vaishnava *sampradaya*. In 1839, while stopping to bathe in the sacred Godavari River, he had met a fellow Chitpavan Brahman who, being impressed by Anant Shastri, had offered him his 9-year-old daughter. In Ramabai's words, 'All [was] settled in an hour or so; next day the marriage concluded; and the little girl was placed in the possession of a stranger, who took her nearly nine hundred miles away from her home . . . Fortunately, the little girl had fallen into good hands, and was well and tenderly cared for.'[2] He changed his bride's name to Lakshmibai and put into practice his radical scheme for female education. Along with cooking, washing, serving guests, and bringing up young children, Lakshmibai spent night hours learning Sanskrit texts and puranic lore.

Ramabai's own learning began at the age of 8. With her father almost blind, instruction fell to her mother. Beginning before dawn, before others were stirring, relentless drilling in the *gurukul* system would begin, with single words, then phrases, and finally sentences recited twice, then five times, or ten times, until every word or phrase was indelibly inscribed in her mind. With increasing proficiency, memorization increased to a thousand and then two thousand spoken lines—each uttered twice and then repeated back five times, or ten times. Palm-leaf books and manuscripts by the hundreds, carefully wrapped in cloth and preserved, would be taken out and transcribed, one by one. Since paper, ink, and printed books were considered too defiling to touch, words were recited aloud, committed to memory, or inscribed onto palm leaves. Whole vocabularies, dictionaries, grammars, commentaries, and classics such as the *Bhagavad Purana* and *Bhagavad Gita* were memorized. By the age of 15, each younger member of her family was able to take turns at giving public recitations or reading from classical works. Travelling from one sacred place to another, they would stay in each place a few months. Sitting by the roadside, in the shade of a great tree, at the confluence of two rivers, on the banks of a tank, or inside a temple hall—a family member would intone the sacred sounds. Passers-by would pause to listen and make offerings of flowers, fruits, food, clothing, or money, hoping thereby to gain expiation and merit (*puniya*).

This pattern of life continued for sixteen years. Then, with resources exhausted and famine stalking the land, Ramabai watched her feeble father, her mother, and her sister succumb to starvation. She and her brother Srinivas managed to survive for four more years. 'We wandered from

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[2] *A Testimony of our Inexhaustible Treasure* (Kedgaon/Pune: Mukti Mission, 1907, 1917; 10th edn. 1977, 11th edn. 1992), 1.

place to place . . . for more than three years after the death of our parents and elder sister. We walked more than four thousand miles on foot without any sort of comfort . . . sometimes going without food . . . from the south to the north as far as Kashmir, and then . . . to Calcutta in 1878.'[3]

Entry into Public Life: Calcutta and Pune

By the time Ramabai and her brother reached Calcutta in 1878, new forces were challenging the Raj. The very same elite communities that had helped to construct the Raj in the first place, that had provided its manpower, money, and methods, wanted an increasing role in its governance. Having gained a mastery over the English language and literatures, these affluent and aspiring people of the 'New India'—enlightened journalists, lawyers, physicians, teachers, bureaucrats, and landed gentry who belonged to India's emerging 'public'—had formed voluntary associations and were demanding an increasing voice. As 'nationalists', they saw themselves as the 'true Indians', as distinct from the tiny elite of Europeans who occupied the highest seats in government. Two reformist societies were to play a role in Ramabai's life—the older Brahmo Samaj of Bengal (Calcutta) and the newer Prarthana Samaj of Maharashtra (Pune). Ramabai soon counted herself among the most ardent nationalists of India.

  Ramabai appeared in Calcutta suddenly. Just 20 years old, her brilliance startled and astounded. Learned *pandits* could hardly believe their ears. This attractive, tiny young woman could recite from memory all the verses of the *Bhagavad Purana*, as well as Panini's famous Grammar. Laboriously they composed a Sanskrit verse in her honour. She composed a dazzling response on the spot. They called her 'Pandita', and then 'Saraswati' ('Goddess of Learning'). An overnight sensation, institutions clamoured to have her as a speaker. Her well-honed skills in storytelling held audiences spellbound; and her celebrity and popularity mounted ever higher. As her fame spread, she became a symbol of national pride, and her words and deeds were reported in remote parts of the world.

  Yet, despite her acclaim, Ramabai was disturbed. The old beliefs— *sanātana-dharma*—no longer sufficed. The suffering and starvation of her parents had broken her faith. When her host, Keshub Chandra Sen, dared her to read texts forbidden to women, in the *Manusmriti*, *Dharmashastras*, Upanishads, and Vedas, she discovered that 'women as a class were worse than demons, . . . and that they could never hope for Moksha'.[4] A woman's

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[3] *A Testimony, 16. In other accounts, she wrote of living on a handful of grain soaked in water, walking barefoot, sleeping under trees or roadside bridges, digging pits to keep warm, and swallowing wild, hard berries.*
[4] Ibid. 18–19.

sole hope of 'heaven' (*svarga*) lay in her husband. Low-caste people could
have no hope of any sort, 'being very like the lower species of animal, such
as pigs'.[5] The 'old religion' (*sanātana-dharma*) would never bring her 'liberty'
(*mukti*). Turning to Brahma monotheism, she turned away from idols, *pujas*,
and shrines. She ceased giving *puranika* recitations and spoke out more and
more on behalf of women. Eventually, even the Brahmo Samaj began to
dismay her as she wrestled with its contradictions and eclecticism. But when
Keshub, despite sermons against child marriage, forced his own daughter
into such a marriage, she turned away from the Brahmo Samaj.[6]

Then came more personal tragedy. First, her brother, Srinivas Sastri
Dongre, suddenly died of cholera. Her companion since infancy was no
longer present to provide family protection, so that she could remain
unmarried, something that was shocking in her day. When news of her
plight reached Pune, social reformers took steps to bring this 'priceless gem'
back to 'her native homeland'—perhaps as a teacher for 'adult women'. The
Subodh Patrika reported that it would be 'blameworthy to allow Ramabai to
stay in a foreign country [*sic*: Calcutta] . . . in such a destitute condition'.
Then suddenly news came that Ramabai, respecting her brother's last
wishes, had married. Babu Bepin Behari Das Medhavi, handsome and
talented, a Calcutta University graduate, an attorney at the District Court
of Sylhet (in Assam) and former Gauhati school headmaster, had asked her
brother for her hand five times. But for a Maratha Brahman woman to
marry a Kayastha, someone she ranked a Sudra at that, was almost unthink-
able. No orthodox priest would officiate; and their wedding occurred in a
civil ceremony. For nineteen months the couple lived happily together in
Assam. Then suddenly he too was struck down by cholera. On 4 February
1882, Ramabai, only 24, found herself a widow with an infant daughter
(born in July 1881). Again, news of Ramabai's plight spread. A Chitpavan
couple in Serampore offered her a place, a gesture she never forgot. The
Prarthana Samaj in Pune, proudly hailing her as a 'native daughter' and 'one
of our own', renewed efforts to bring her to Pune. But, ever cautious, she
wanted to be beholden to no one. Addressing an assembly of ladies in
Dacca, she solemnly declared that, henceforth, she would give her life
entirely to the betterment of women.

In the meantime Ramabai reached another turning point in her quest for
spiritual liberty (*mukti*), moving her gradually from an intellectual to a
devotional (*bhakti*) approach. While she and her husband were living in
Silchar (Cachar district, Assam), she came across a pamphlet in her home. As

[5] Ibid. 19–20. She read that molten lead was to be poured into the ears of any Sudra who just
happened to overhear the Vedas being recited.
[6] *The Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, ed. A. B. Shah (Bombay: Maharashtra State
Board for Literature, 1977), p. xv n. 5.

she started to read what was a Bengali copy of Luke's Gospel, she became fascinated. Her husband's long-time friend, a Baptist missionary named Isaac Allen, answered her questions. She later recalled: 'Having lost all faith in my former religion, and with my heart hungering after something better, I eagerly learnt everything I could about the Christian religion, and declared my intention to become a Christian.' But her husband, having attended a Christian school and appreciated the Bible, did not like the idea of his wife 'being publicly baptized and joining the despised Christian community'.[7]

Ramabai's appearance in Pune attracted attention—and controversy. After settling into a guest residence (Abhyanker's *wada*), her speaking engagements multiplied. With help from social reformers such as Raosaheb Mahdeo Govind Ranade and Sir Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, she founded the Arya Mahila Samaj. At its first meeting, on 1 June 1882, attended by a throng of prominent ladies, she challenged all women to free themselves from oppressive customs, child marriage, denial of basic literacy, and, especially, oppression of high-caste child widows. Mrs Ramabai Ranade reported, 'The sweet and musical flow of her speech and the manner in which she presented her subject were alike admirable . . . She had an amazing skill in winning the hearts of her hearers to whatever she had to say. The result was that every educated person in the city who desired to learn, was filled with pride and admiration.' In her first book, *Stree Dharma-Nīti* (*Morals for Women*), she castigated Brahman men for how they treated their women and chided women for slovenly habits that lost the respect of their husbands.

Opposition to Ramabai now came from orthodox Brahmans of her own caste community, something that hounded her for the rest of her life. Nowhere was this more blatant than from women within the Ranade house. Ranade was her champion. His second wife, also named Ramabai, had been educated by him and was her friend. She vividly described this animosity: 'They detest Panditabai more and more every day. If she called on us, they would say to me, "She is a wretched convert. Don't touch anything in our house, after touching her . . . We cannot tolerate such sacrilege. What an accursed thing! Her father turned her into a devotee and wedded her to the heavenly bridegroom, Shri Dwarkanath. And yet, this wretch married a Bengali baboo and polluted herself. She has brought utter ruin on everyone connected with her and is now out to pollute the whole world!!"'[8]

    [7] *A Testimony*, 23.
    [8] Ramābāī Rānade, *Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences* (Delhi: GOI, Publications Division, 1963): translation from Marathi of her *Amchya Ayushatil Kahi Ashavai* (Pune: Dnyanaprakash Press, 1910), by Kusumavati Deshpande, 82. Also see: Ramābāī Rānade, *Himself: The Autobiography of a Hindu Lady*, trans. and adapted by Katherine Van Akin Gates from Marathi book written by Mrs Ranade (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1938).

Predictably, heavy criticism also came from Chitpavan men. Kashinath Trimbak Terang and Bal Gangadhar (later 'Lokamanya') Tilak gave priority to *political* over social reforms. Through such newspapers as *Kesari* (in Marathi) and *The Mahratta* (in English) they mobilized opposition against her. Her words 'interfered' with 'national' issues, and threatened their male dominance. They took exception to radical calls for female literacy, medical training, and liberation. What especially aroused hardened opposition was Ramabai's public testimony before the Hunter Commission on Education, on 5 September 1882: 'I am the child of a man who had to suffer a great deal on account of advocating Female Education, and who was compelled to discuss the subject, as well as to carry out his own views amidst great opposition . . . I consider it my duty, to the very end of my life, to maintain this cause, and to advocate the proper position of women in this land.'[9] What women needed most was education, especially medical training designed for and by means of women teachers. Without such agency, the age-old oppression of India's women would never come to an end. W. W. Hunter, having already heard her speak in Bengal, ordered her testimony translated and published as a pamphlet and the purchase of 600 copies of her book. Proceeds from the sale of her book soon enabled her to purchase passage aboard a ship bound for England (20 April 1882), for medical training.

Meanwhile, Ramabai's interest in Christian ideas continued. This soon brought her into contact with Nehemiah (aka Nilakantha) Goreh who, like herself, was a Chitpavan Brahman. Goreh, by then an ordained Anglican missionary well versed in Sanskrit literature, took pains to answer difficult questions. Then, when her friend Ranade's wife Ramabai decided to learn English, Ramabai asked if she might be permitted to attend the lessons. Their teacher, an Anglo-Catholic sister named 'Miss Hurford', used a Marathi version of the New Testament as their textbook. Later, when Ramabai booked passage to England, Miss Hurford contacted sisters of her mission. The Community of St Mary the Virgin (CSMV) invited Ramabai to stay as a guest at their headquarters in Wantage. But Ramabai, adamantly opposed to accepting charity, only agreed to do so in return for her giving Sanskrit lessons to fledgling missionary sisters. Ramabai also made clear that she would not become a Christian.

Encounters with Ecclesiastical Colonialism in England

Ramabai, her little daughter, and a friend, Anandibai Bhagat, landed in England on 17 May 1883. After meeting the former Governor of the

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[9] Pandita Ramabai, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Rogers Printing Co., 1888), pp. xvi–xvii.

Bombay Presidency, Sir Bartle Frere, she wrote an 'Open Letter' entitled 'The Cry of the Indian Women', appealing for a 'destitute home' to help female victims of oppression. At a 'Rescue Home' in Fulham, her eyes had been opened. 'Here for the first time in my life,' she recalled, 'I came to know that something could be done to reclaim the so-called fallen women and that Christians, whom Hindus considered outcastes and cruel, were kind to these unfortunate women . . . I had never heard or seen anything of the kind done for this class of women by the Hindus of my own country.'[10] The story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman had shown her about 'the Infinite Love of Christ for sinners'—that Christ had come not to condemn but to save all who turned to him. 'I had never read or heard anything like this. . . . I realized, after reading the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel, that Christ was truly the Divine Saviour he claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden women of India . . . Thus my heart was drawn to the religion of Christ. I was intellectually convinced.'[11] On 29 September 1883, she and daughter Manorama were baptized. She later confessed, 'I never regretted having taken that step. I was hungry for something better . . . I found it in the Christian Bible and was satisfied.'[12]

But then another blow fell. Ramabai's companion from India, Anandibai Bhagat, took her own life. Professor Max Müller, the renowned Sanskritist, recalled (Oxford, 27 October 1883): 'We had a nice visit from Ramabai, a Bramin lady who knows Sanskrit splendidly. She knows books as long as Homer by heart from beginning to end, speaks correctly and writes Sanskrit poetry. Although she came to England to study and take a degree, she is very unhappy . . . What happened was quite terrible. Her friend, frightened by the idea that she and Ramabai would be made Christians by force, committed suicide. It was at this terrible catastrophe that Ramabai came to stay with us at Oxford.'[13]

But this tragedy was only the beginning of Ramabai's troubles. She faced a head-on collision with efforts by Church of England authorities to impose their will upon her. Sister Geraldine, the person charged by the Mother Superior to 'mentor' Ramabai, did not succeed.[14] The cloying confinement of Wantage, with its strict discipline, regimentation, and Anglo-Catholicism, was too much. When Ramabai was told that deafness would preclude

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[10] *A Testimony*, 25–6.

[11] Ibid.

[12] *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, ed. Shah, 'Introduction', pp. xv, 14–15.

[13] Friedrich Max Müller, *Auld Lang Syne: My Indian Friends*, Second Series (III) (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1899/1900), 127–8. Also see: 'Pandita Ramabai', by Sister Geraldine; Mother Harriet's letter (1 Sept. 1883), enclosing Anandibai's suicide note; in *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 9–14.

[14] 'Apologia Pro Opere', '1917' and 'Pandita Ramabai', by Sister Geraldine: *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 3–9.

her getting a medical education, she decided to equip herself to provide basic education for high-caste child widows in India. As a free spirit yearning for liberty, she determined to leave Wantage. She wanted freedom to ask her own questions and pursue her own vision. Dorothea Beale, a Broad Church intellectual with a philosophical turn of mind, had only recently herself struggled with hard questions about her faith.[15] As founder and principal of the Cheltenham Ladies' College and a forceful champion of women's education, she shared Ramabai's vision.[16] With help from Professor Max Müller in obtaining a grant from the Royal Bounty Fund (via William Gladstone and Queen Victoria), the move to Cheltenham was completed in early 1884: Ramabai would study under Beale and, at the same time, serve as Professor of Sanskrit. Her two years with Dorothea Beale provided rational reinforcement for her ongoing struggles with Sister Geraldine.

At issue was Ramabai's adamant refusal to be controlled. Efforts to 'steer her' and make her 'conform' ran up against an iron will. The Anglo-Catholic establishment failed to see what Max Müller had quickly grasped—that 'this [was] a truly heroic Hindu lady, in appearance small, delicate, and timid, [but] in reality strong and bold as a lioness'.[17] Accused of insubordination, on 8 May 1884, she retorted: 'they [the bishops] have gone too far . . . It was very kind of you to give me a home in this country . . . [but] I must tell you that when I find out that you or your friends have no trust in me, and they want, whether directly or indirectly, to interfere with my personal liberty, I must say "good-bye" to you and go my way, by which my Lord God will guide me. I have long since taken all matters which concern me into my own hand and shall by no means let others lay a hand on my liberty. I have a conscience, and mind and a judgment of my own. I must myself think and do everything which GOD has given me the power of doing . . . I am, it is true, a member of the Church of Christ, but I am not bound to accept every word that falls down from the lips of priests or bishops . . . I have just with great efforts freed myself from the yoke of the Indian priestly tribe, so I am not at present willing to place myself under a similar yoke by accepting everything which comes from priests as authorised command of the Most High.'[18] Refusing to bend to Wantage or the bishops, she added: 'It is quite true that we cannot know what will come in

[15] Elizabeth Raikes, *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham: Faith Restored* (London: Archibald Constable & Company, 1908), 187–96.

[16] Amy Key Clarke, *A History of the Cheltenham Ladies' College, 1853–1953* (London: Faber & Faber, [1953]).

[17] *The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller*, ed. his wife (London: Longmans Green &Co., 1902), ii. 149.

[18] Ramabai to Sister Geraldine (from Ladies' College, Cheltenham, 12 May 1885): *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai* 58–61.

the next moment; yet we have a great gift from God, i.e. *our own free will*. By it we are to decide for our selves what we are to do . . . I am arguing with those people who give their opinion or decide anything for me without knowing my will, and above all God's will . . . to decide my future.' Exasperated, Sister Geraldine chided Pandita Ramabai for her lack of 'humility, childlike simplicity, obedience, truthfulness, and trustfulness'. The 'germ of new life' given her in baptism was now 'overgrown by rank and poisonous weeds of heresy'.

Ramabai continued to see herself as both 'Hindu' and 'Christian'—a pilgrim attempting to resolve inner conflicts within herself and within her own people in India. Refusing to become a clone, a proselyte, or a hostage of either Anglicanism, or any other form of Christendom, she withstood each onslaught and kept her balance. Within her lay a toughness forged on anvils of hard experience: survival amidst the perils and privations of her early life on the Indian road mingled with inspiration from her initial Christian conversion in Assam where she had first encountered the Gospel. Biblical doctrines planted by Isaac Allen, the Baptist missionary, remained rooted. Striving for rational answers, she made distinctions between scriptural truths and church dogma. Contradictions and contentions between denominational groups, each claiming the Bible or the Church as foundations for truth, had to be sorted out: 'Besides meeting people of the most prominent sects, the High Church, Low Church, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Friends, Unitarian, Universalist, Roman Catholic, Jew, and others, I met with Spiritualists, Theosophists, Mormons, Christian Scientist, and followers of what they call the occult religions. No one can have any idea of what my feelings were at finding such a Babel of religions in Christian countries.'[19] During Easter weekend of 1885, as resistance to her Anglican 'handlers' reached a crisis, Ramabai managed to escape to Clifton, near Bristol, where Isaac Allen, her old Baptist mentor from Assam, was convalescing, recovering from malaria, in the home of the Revd Richard Glover, pastor of Tyndale Baptist Church (1869–1911) and a leader within the Baptist Missionary Society.[20]

The 'Easter Holiday' marked a turning point. Writing to Canon William Butler, founder of the CSMV and the person who had baptized her, Ramabai used stronger terms: 'I believe the Bible says in detail all that is necessary for the salvation of mankind. There are in the Bible all the

[19] *A Testimony*, 26–8. She compared these with dissensions between various Hindu groups she knew.

[20] *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 20. Brian Stanley, 'A Cambridge Passage through India: The Making of T. R. Glover's The Jesus of History', *Cambridge Review*, 119: 2331 (Nov. 1998), 60–9 (p. 62).

essential articles of faith to be found . . . All the days of the week are as much holy in God's sight as the first or the last day of the week . . . An honest and contrite heart and true words are acceptable to God, and not outward ceremonies. Inspired books are proofs of themselves, their own honest words prove their truthfulness. And so a great many things which are not essential are left to man's choice.' She added, 'I believe in Christ . . . I shall not bind myself to believe in and accept everything that is taught by the church; before I accept it I must be convinced that it is according to Christ's teaching.'[21] When Beale tried to caution Butler, he retorted, 'What I crave for her is a ''*humble* heart'' [italics in original]; . . . to a neophyte in the Faith . . . self-reliance is intensely dangerous.'[22]

Sister Geraldine warned Ramabai against having anything to do with dissenters, nonconformists, and other dangerous 'heretical sects', since she had been 'baptised into the Church of England'. To this Ramabai replied: 'Baptism and the solemn oath which we take before GOD do not belong exclusively to one person or to one church with particular beliefs and customs. They are Catholic, i.e. Universal . . . In the Roman, Greek, English or Dissent [*sic*] Church, if a person believes with all his heart Christ to be the Son of God, might he not say with the [Ethiopian] Eunuch, ''Behold here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?'' Baptism does not bind a person to obey certain rules laid down by uninspired men' and only 'binds [one] to obey Christ'.[23] Geraldine retorted: 'you are not in a position, dear Ramabai, to argue or lay down the law as to the prerogatives of the Catholic Church. You are . . . but a babe in the Faith, and your duty is to sit as a humble learner . . . ''Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection.'' '[24] By November, having found out that, against her wishes, Manorama was being pressed into High Anglicanism, Ramabai reproached her 'dear old Ajeebai' with gentle but firm words: 'You seem to be very hard upon the Baptists, Congregationalists, Wesleyans, and among other bodies, mostly upon Unitarians.'[25]

Acclaim and Adventure in America

By February 1886, when she sailed for America, Ramabai's views on what constituted the One and Only True Holy Catholic Faith had become

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[21] Pandita Ramabai to Canon Butler (Cheltenham, 2, 3 July 1885): *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 72–80.

[22] William Butler to Dorothea Beale at Cheltenham (Wantage, 5 July 1885): ibid. 76–7.

[23] Pandita Ramabai to Sister Geraldine (Wantage, 22 Sept. night, 1885): ibid. 88 (87–90).

[24] Sister Geraldine to Pandita Ramabai (Wantage, 5 Oct. 1885): ibid. 95; (Bath, Oct. 1885): ibid. 102: 'such bodies as the Wesleyans can not be said to belong to the Church because they were not knit together by the rites which Christ appointed.'

[25] Pandita Ramabai to Sister Geraldine (Ladies' College, Cheltenham, 7 Nov. 1885): ibid.

fixed. Henceforth, there was a steady movement away from conformity with any single earthly community—from any church on earth. As had been the case while in Pune, inner struggles and turmoils were still going on when Ramabai's days in England came to an end. Even after her American sojourn was over, her quest for *mukti* continued. Days of deeper inner peace, resolution, and serene tranquillity still lay far ahead of her. After completing two years of study at Cheltenham Ladies' College, relations with Wantage had reached a breaking point. Then, unexpectedly, she received an invitation to attend and celebrate the graduation of her 'cousin' from the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia. Ramabai did not hesitate to accept.

The story of Anandibai Joshi is yet another stirring tale in the history of India's women.[26] Her life, along with that of Ramabai, cannot be fully appreciated without grasping cultural and social contexts. The first Indian woman to earn an MD, she had been a child bride who happened to be extremely fortunate in both her father and her husband, Gopal Vinayak Joshi. He had been her teacher when, at the age of 8, they were married. She had accompanied him to various postings in the Indian Postal Service. He had encouraged her scholarly interests, and she had become quite learned. The death of her only child for lack of medical treatment for women had convinced her to become a physician. While living in Serampore, far from their native Maharashtra, she had learned English and prepared to study overseas. It was there that she and her husband had invited the just widowed but already renowned Ramabai to come and live with them. Determination had then driven Anandibai to sell her wedding jewellery in order to pay for passage on a ship to Philadelphia. In the face of a public outcry against her crossing 'Black Water' (*Kala Pani*: Sea or Ocean), and thus polluting herself, Anandibai, for the first time in her life, had then spoken out publicly in defence of going to America. On 24 February 1883, to a packed audience in College Hall, Serampore, she had courageously declared: 'There is probably no country so barbarous as India . . . The want of female physicians in India is keenly felt. In my humble opinion, there is a growing need for Hindu lady doctors in India, and I volunteer to qualify myself for one.'[27]

Anandibai had boarded a ship for America in the same month that Ramabai sailed for England. Now, three years later, exhausted and already fatally ill (with tuberculosis), Anandibai stood two days on a cold, windy, and icebound wharf awaiting Ramabai's ship. That night, hardly able to keep her hand steady, she wrote about the cousin she had never before met:

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[26] Caroline Wells Healey Dall, *The Life of Dr. Anandabai Joshee* (Boston, 1888), 84 (81–91).
[27] Ibid.

'She is a woman, tender with feeling, as tender as a flower, timid as can be, and impatient of pain, but her courage has outweighed that of the sternest and bravest warrior.'[28] These words could well have been written about Anandibai herself. One of Anandibai's closest American friends came from Washington for the graduation and penned a vivid impression: 'Ramabai is strikingly beautiful. Her face is clean-cut oval; her eyes, dark and large, glow with feeling. She is brunette, but her cheeks are full of colour. Her white widow's saree is drawn closely over her head and fastened under her chin.'[29]

On 12 March 1886, one day after the graduation, Ramabai delivered her first address in America. After being served tea with 'about eighty ladies of the highest social position', she rose to speak. A crowd of 500 to 600 had jammed the Hall and, in the words of Caroline Dall, 'was reverent, struck by the speaker's beauty and awed by her enthusiasm and eloquence . . . The hush which followed her appeal when, after clasping her hands in silence for a few moments, she lifted her voice to God in earnest entreaty for her countrywomen. The whole city echoed the next day with wondering inquiry and explanation.'[30] An Indian reporter wired *The Mahratta* (2 May 1886):[31] 'A Hindoo woman of high caste, her slight figure wrapped in the white robe of Indian widowhood, out of which looked a face of most picturesque beauty', spoke without a text and, 'standing in an easy attitude, with her hands clasped upon the desk before her and speaking with a voice of musical sweetness and distinction, and with the unembarrassed manner of genuine simplicity . . . [had] told the story of Hindoo womanhood.'

Overnight, Pandita Ramabai became a national sensation. The impression she made would change the course of her life. Her name was heard and seen often across the length and breadth of America. What she did and said was followed closely. Articles poured forth by the hundred, especially from women's magazines. Invitations and speaking engagements multiplied. In lecture tours back and forth across the land, she told her story and challenged Americans to help their less fortunate sisters in India. Her message conveyed a practical proposal, something she had been planning for some time. What she wanted to build was a special residential 'boarding school' for high-caste child widows. This institution would provide shelter, basic training, literacy, and practical (vocational) skills. A secular or non-sectarian institution would enable all its high-caste residents to avoid pollution and to

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[28] Anandibai Joshi to Mrs Carpenter (Philadelphia, 7 Mar. 1886): ibid. 128–9.
[29] Caroline Wells Healey Dall (10 Mar. 1886): ibid. 130–6.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions* (Bombay: SNDT Women's University, 1995), 152–3.

preserve caste purity. Well aware that, to be successful, anything faintly hinting of proselytization or religious indoctrination would have to be avoided, Ramabai also knew that, in order to succeed, such an institution needed not only wholehearted participation from reform-minded leaders in India (especially her old friends and supporters of the Arya Mahila Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj) but also financial support from her new friends in America. What she envisioned was a voluntary association governed by a 'two-headed' administrative apparatus—a local governing board made up of prominent Indians and an overseas board made up of prominent Americans (and, eventually, others). Ramabai's reception in America, like her earlier reception in Maharashtra, drew enormous publicity. Within both societies, the imaginations of leaders among prominent, reform-minded upper-class notables were awakened. Ramabai's time of reflection and study in England had prepared her for the whirlwind of activity in America. As with her time in Assam, so again with her time in England, Ramabai's many months of meditation and study unleashed a torrent of pent-up energy and furious productivity.

Behind Ramabai, in all these activities, lay the encouraging hand of Rachel Bodley. Dr Rachel L. Bodley, President of the Women's Medical College, was distinguished, devout, and well connected. She made the right contacts with the right people. Having watched over Anandibai, she now gave Ramabai her fullest support. Ramabai was taken to kindergartens and shown the principles upon which they ran. She acquired advanced and approved textbooks, and translated these into Marathi. By July 1886, she had designed a curriculum in Marathi (with American-designed woodcuts to be printed on her return to Bombay). She enrolled in a 'kindergarten training-school' where, despite her heavy lecturing schedule, she managed to complete a full year of academic course work.

At the behest of Rachel Bodley, Ramabai turned her lectures into a book. Reflecting months of research and study at Cheltenham, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, her first book in English, also became her most famous publication. With its introduction by Bodley and dedicated to the memory of Ramabai's mother, Lakshmibai Dongre, and to Dr Anandibai Joshi (who had just died in Pune), the book's success was both immediate and widespread. Before the year was out, a second edition appeared; and later printings followed. Bodley, hopeful that profits would provide support for a network of schools, wrote: 'If, therefore, every American woman who during the last twelvemonth, has taken Ramabai by the hand, every college student who has heard the Pundita speak in college halls, every reader of this book whose heart has been stirred to compassion by the perusal of its sorrowful pages, will at once purchase a copy of the book and induce a friend to do the same, each reader being responsible for the sale of one copy,

the work is done, and the large fund needed to prepay passages to India, to purchase the illustrative material for the school-rooms, to illustrate and print the school-books, and secure the needed school property in India, is at once assured.'[32]

Details of Ramabai's triumphant two-year sojourn in the United States, reflecting the depth of her penetration into the consciousness of public life and, especially, into circles of high-society ladies, as well as churches, colleges, and universities, have been explored by Edith Blumhofer. By late 1888, Ramabai sailed for home confident in the knowledge that some of America's most renowned, forward-looking religious leaders, reflecting a broad spectrum of denominational and doctrinal positions, from Universalists to Evangelicals, had pledged themselves to her cause. The Ramabai Association, formed at a crowded meeting in Channing Hall, Boston, on Tuesday, 13 December 1887, was headed by prominent figures. On the Board of Trustees were Edward Everett Hale (President) and Phillips Brooks, George A. Gordon, Rachel L. Bodley, Frances Willard, and Mary Hemingway (Vice-Presidents). Before 'sailing through the Golden Gate' after four months in San Francisco, Ramabai could count on sixty-three Ramabai Circles which had pledged some $5,000 (Rs. 15,000) annually; $11,000 for building a residential hall and another $14,000 for a school house. After stops in Japan and China, Ramabai landed at the Gateway of India on 1 February 1889.

Struggles of the Sharada Sadan

Immediately making a quick trip to Pune to pick up her daughter—Manorama had been brought to India by the Wantage Sisters, to whom she had been sent from America—Ramabai organized a local Advisory Board. This Board, led by Justice Ranade, advised her to start her school in Bombay, away from the reactionary Chitpavan-Hindu elite who were already girding themselves to do battle against her. In Bombay, she worked 'like a steam engine'—renting and furnishing a house, buying school equipment and materials, advertising, and doing 'a hundred nameless things'. On 11 March, a gathering of 150 'ladies and gentlemen' selected from among the city's reformist elite attended the grand opening of 'Sharada Sadan' ('Home of Learning'). After a 'benedictory prayer', 'encouraging speeches' from prominent notables, and the election of Mrs Kashibai Kanikar as President, Ramabai gave an inaugural address. After reviewing efforts on behalf of high-caste widows, obstacles encountered, and results of

[32] *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, introd. Rachel L. Bodley, AM, MD, pp. xxiii–xxiv; Shah, 'Introduction', in *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, p. xx: this sold 10,000 copies and earned over $8,000.

her mission to England and America, she appealed for support and rendered a financial statement. Finally, she outlined how the Home would protect high-caste women from pollution, provide basic literacy for each young woman, and avoid any hint of religious propaganda.[33]

While reactions to this 'strictly neutral' (secular) venture were initially positive, some local Christians did not think such 'neutrality' would work[34] and some Hindu nationalists remained deeply suspicious. Ramabai's 'change of religion' was viewed as a 'misfortune'. Yet, many could see that she had 'not given up her national pride'. Nevertheless, storm clouds began to gather. By December of 1890, twenty-one months later, expenses prompted Ramabai to move the Sharada Sadan to Pune. This move, into the very teeth of Chitpavan power and Hindutva nationalism, seemed, on the face of it, foolhardy and fraught with danger. At almost the same time, Ramabai herself began to experience the most momentous and radical conversion experience of her life. This 'personal encounter' with Christ and 'not merely His religion' brought her such joy that she could not contain herself. But, as a consequence, during her daily time of personal devotions and worship (prayer and praise), in which she kept the door of her room open, she became a focal point of interest among some of her adoring young women. As she later explained: 'When starting from San Francisco, and on landing in Bombay, I had resolved in my mind, that although no direct religious instruction was to be given to the inmates of my home, yet I would daily read aloud and pray to the only True God in the name of Christ; that my countrywomen, seeing and hearing . . . might be led to enquire about the true religion . . . No one was urged to become a Christian, nor was anyone compelled to study the Bible. But the Book was in the library along with other religious books. The daily testimony to the goodness of the True God awakened new thoughts in many a heart.'[35]

Serious trouble began soon after 28 January 1890, when one of the girls turned to Christ. Only a month earlier, just after her move to Pune, *Kesari* had grumbled that any institution funded by Christians was not likely to gain approval from Hindus. But now that a conversion had actually happened, a storm of protest broke and outcries of 'scandal' erupted. In June 1891, Bal Gangadhar ('Lokmanya') Tilak, through *Kesari*, accused Ramabai and her supporters with being gullible: 'We consider the Christian women, who try to make inroads into our society under the garb of female education . . . to be

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[33] *Dnyānodaya* (14 Mar. 1889, 81–2); and Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 157–8.

[34] *Dnyānodaya* (14 Mar. 1889, 81–2). Vaman Narayan Tilak, the editor of this Marathi Christian periodical, probably felt that 'neutrality' was a mistake: 'One cannot be true to God and man, and be neutral in questions referring to the relation between them.'

[35] A *Testimony*, 40–1.

the enemies of our society, of Hinduism, and even of female education.'[36] Defenders of Ramabai accused her attackers, in turn, of 'contemptible' hypocrisy: 'Surely, if she had truly wanted to pursue a Christian agenda, Ramabai would never have enlisted Hindu advisors.'[37] One writer for the *Indu-Prakash*, weighing evidence by both sides, concluded that Ramabai had not founded the Sharada Sadan in order 'to draw Bramin widows into the Christian flock'.[38] The war of words, attacks by *Kesari* and *Mahratta*, and rebuttals by the *Sudharak*, *Subodh Patrika*, and the English *Indu-Prakash*, dragged on for more than two years.

Ultimately, the controversy turned not on 'religious neutrality' and 'secularism', but on religious liberty itself. While Ramabai did not actively attempt to bring about the conversions, neither was she prepared to surrender her personal freedom to act, pray, speak, or worship in accordance with her own conscience. Nor was she prepared to infringe upon the freedom of any one else within the Sharada Sadan—either in preventing someone from being exposed to Christian influence or to guarantee that each girl left the Sharada Sadan as untainted (or 'Hindu') as when she arrived. To do so, in her view, would vitiate her whole campaign on behalf of high-caste child widows. Her stand was in accord with that of the Ramabai Association in America which insisted that the Sharada Sadan's remaining entirely secular in its influence and instruction did not entail insisting that Ramabai cease to act, in her private life, as a believing Christian. Thus, when a member of the initial Advisory Board in India had written to the Ramabai Association in America, claiming to speak for all members and insisting that the Sharada Sadan should not only scrupulously observe Brahmanical caste restrictions but also actively discriminate in favour of Hindu customs and rites, thereby severely narrowing the space for any kind of neutrality and secularity, the situation became difficult.

What added to Ramabai's trouble were newspaper reports that Gopalrao Joshi, widower of the late Dr Anandibai Joshi, had been 'baptised. . . . into the Christian fold' and that he had done so in order to marry Ramabai. Ramabai instantly sued for defamation. Yet, even the publishing of a retraction and apology, and another news report (*Indu-Prakash*) that Gopalrao had ritually returned to the Hindu fold, muddied the waters and Ramabai's reputation suffered.[39]

At last, in August 1893, amidst fears that Hindu–Muslim riots raging in Bombay might spread to Pune, Ramabai's Advisory Board collapsed.

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[36] Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 160–2.
[37] *Sudharak* (6 July 1891, 2): ibid. 162.
[38] *Indu-Prakash* (17 Aug. 1891, 4): ibid.
[39] *Mahratta* (5 July 1891), 3: ibid. 164.

Continual sniping had intimidated weaker members and worn them down. Most, like the Prarthana Samaj, wanted 'religious reform' more than social reform. On 13 August, they circulated an open letter to the Ramabai Association in Boston, formally severing their connection with the Sadan. As reported in *Kesari* on 22–23 August (reproduced in English), they accused the Ramabai Association in America, and Ramabai herself, of having 'departed from the lines of strict neutrality on which the institution was started and managed for some time'; of having induced girls 'to attend her private prayers regularly and read the Bible'; of asking guardians and parents to allow their girls to attend such prayers; of doing nothing to prevent a girl from becoming a Christian; and of alienating public Hindu support.[40]

The result of this letter was immediate. Guardians and parents withdrew their child widows; and the Sadan was boycotted by Chitpavan Brahmans. Anti-Christian and Hindutva sentiments prevailed at the expense of religious freedom, secularism, and toleration. Never again did Ramabai enjoy support from the Hindu public at large. The event marked the end of Ramabai's career upon the all-India stage. Her public visibility shrank within the society she had so strenuously sought to help and her influence among Hindu elites became marginalized. Some time before, she had written to Dorothea Beale that 'people who are mine . . . look [upon] me as a foe and a stranger' and that she would have been glad if such people had taken over the Sharada Sadan or established something similar for themselves. Three years earlier (2 February 1890), she already had written to *Kesari*: 'If my countrymen had given me adequate support and encouragement, there would have been no need for the Sharada Sadan to become a Christian institution . . . [But since] the Hindus would not give the funds for establishing such a school, I had to beg from the Christians. If you are prepared to run the school now, our Christian patrons will make no difficulty at all. In this, we Christians will only help you.'[41]

In the end, Ramabai's original cause survived. Three years later, in 1896, a 'Hindu Sharada Sadan' was established, though it did not actually open until 1899.[42] Located within Pune, and then moved to the suburb of Hinge, this Hindu Widows' Home (*Anath Balikashram*) owed its inspiration directly to Ramabai. D. K. ('Maharshi') Karve, its founder, was a professor at Fergusson College. Having lost his wife, he determined to marry a literate widow, even at the risk of being excommunicated (or 'outcasted'). His new

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[40] *Kesari* (22 Aug. 1893), 3: ibid. 163. Also, *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 302 ff.

[41] Shah, 'Introduction', in *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, p. xxv.

[42] Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 164 ff. Eventually, in 1916, this Home/School became what is now known as the SNDT Women's University (now in Santa Cruz, Bombay).

wife, Godubai Natu, renamed 'Anandibai', was a former student from Ramabai's Bombay Sharada Sadan.[43] Since his new Home had strict pollution rules and hence was closed to non-Brahman widows, Ramabai was able to turn her attention to lesser privileged, and more polluted, segments of society. By 1902, after her own Sharada Sadan itself had been moved to Kedgaon, both Ramabai and her Sadan had ceased to exist as far as Brahmans were concerned.

Years later, Max Müller assessed what had happened. He felt that Ramabai's becoming a Christian had raised a serious obstacle and, thereby, doomed her venture: 'Though we may trust her that she never made an attempt at proselytising among the little widows committed to her care, yet how could it be otherwise than that those to whom the world had been so unkind and Ramabai so kind should wish to be what their friend was, Christian?!! Her very goodness was the real proselytizing power that could not be hidden; but she lost, of course, the support of her native friends and has even now to fight her battles alone, in order to secure the pecuniary assistance necessary for the support of her little army of child-widows. She is, indeed, a noble and unselfish woman, and deserves every help which those who sympathize with her objects can give.'[44]

Mukti Mission of Kedgaon

During 1893, just when Ramabai had been encountering her worst opposition over the Sharada Sadan, Vivekananda made a triumphal tour of the United States. This was capped by his appearance at the First World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.[45] At that event, he succeeded in convincing liberally minded, generous, and eclectic clerics, some of whom were on the Board of the Ramabai Association, that 'Hinduism' should be 'finally recognized' and 'elevated' into the rank of a 'world religion'.[46] At the same time, he also became a one-man 'truth squad' during his travels to blunt or nullify Ramabai's impact in North America. Wherever he went, he denigrated what she had said and done. Word of what was

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[43] Anandibai Karve (1858–1950), 'Autobiography', in *The New Brahmans: Five Maharashtrian Families*, trans. D. D. Karve, ed. Karve and Ellen E. McDonald (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 58–79. 'During the whole of my married life, I have sheltered and raised so many poor orphans and helpless widows that it would be impossible to count them.'

[44] Müller, *Auld Lang Syne*, 128.

[45] Eric J. Ziolkowski, 'Heavenly Visions and Worldly Intentions: Chicago's Columbian Exposition and World's Parliament of Religions (1893)', *Journal of American Culture*, 13: 4 (1990), 11–12, documents this American 'discovery' and 'validation'. Cf. John Henry Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions . . . of 1893*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament Publishing, 1893).

[46] Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'Constructions of Hinduism at the Nexus of History and Religion', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23: 3 (Winter 1993), 523–50.

happening, together with attacks she was suffering in Pune, may partially account for the more strident tone of the rhetoric she employed in what she now began to see as her part in an all-out war against darkness and evil.

In October 1894, Ramabai donned the apparel of a *sannyasini* (mendicant) and travelled to sacred sites she had not seen since her youth. She wanted to learn what, if anything, could be done to rescue abandoned or destitute widows. After a fortnight in Brindaban, she wrote: 'I had known something of the condition of widows in this and other places, but I had no real idea of the terrible facts which I came to know.' Hundreds of agents were being sent out 'to look for young widows and bring them by hundreds and thousands to sacred cities to rob them of their money and their virtue. They entice the poor, ignorant women to leave their own homes, to live in the *kshetras*—i.e. the holy places—and then after robbing them tempt them to yield to their unholy desires. They shut the young, helpless widows into their large *maths* (monasteries), sell and hire them out to wicked men ... and, when the poor miserable slaves are no longer pleasing to their cruel masters, turn them out in the streets to beg ... [and] die a death worse than of starved street [pariah] dogs.'[47] But, as seven widows whom she tried to rescue were taken away by force and locked up, she nearly lost her own life. Responding to information being spread by Vivekananda, Ramabai urged her Western readers not to be charmed by 'grand philosophies' of the East but to 'go and open the trap-doors into the dark cellars where they [would] see the actual workings of the philosophies they admire so much ... and go round to Jagannathpuri, Benares, Gaya, Allahabad, Mathura, Brindaban, Dwarka, Pandharpur, Udippi, Tirupaty and such sacred cities, the strongholds of Hinduism'. Having herself visited places where she had once lived, she could report that thousands of priests and men learned in sacred lore were not hesitating to 'oppress the widows and devour widows' houses' or 'trample the poor, ignorant, low-caste people under their heels'.[48]

From late 1896, while severe famine ravaged the land, Ramabai launched into rescue and relief work. Commencing in Sohapur (CP), she saved 'three little famished skeleton-like' orphans who lay outside the doors of a poor house, which was 'no poor house at all'. Seeing girls and women waylaid and carried off to carnal markets, she recalled how, as a girl of 18, she herself could just as 'easily have fallen into the cruel hands of wicked people'. She found that 'parents were selling their girl-children for a rupee or a few

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[47] Nicol MacNicol, *Pandita Ramabai* (Calcutta: Association Press [YMCA], 1926), 90–1. Padmini Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: Her Life and Work* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1970), 228.

[48] *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 312–13.

annas, or even for a few sears [*sic*] of grain'.[49] By the time she returned from her first expedition in January 1897, sixty female famine victims had been rescued. In May Ramabai returned to the worst-stricken areas to pick up more victims. This time, she and her helpers entered the famine zone with a convoy of bullock carts, jolting along dusty roads day and night, stopping briefly by a riverside to rest or bathe, picking up small destitute girls hiding in jungles where beasts prowled.[50]

A crisis in Pune interrupted this journey. Bubonic plague was ravaging Maharashtra; and health officials ordered famine victims living in a separate building of the Sharada Sadan compound to be removed from Pune within forty-eight hours. Fortunately, Ramabai had taken steps a year earlier, just as troubles over the Sharada Sadan had begun to mount. After much prayer and thought, she and her assistant, Soondarbai Powar, had located an ideal plot of land at Kedgaon, on the rail line just thirty-four miles from Pune. In Bombay, just as she was about to use her life insurance as collateral for a loan, a cable had arrived with enough money for the purchase. One hundred acres had been bought; and work in clearing it, digging a well, planting orange, lime, and mango trees, and preparing fields for the cultivation of crops had been organized. On a once 'bare, stone, treeless, and waterless' tract there was more than enough space to quickly erect an encampment of tents and sheds for famine victims.[51]

Famine victims, along with staff to assist and teach them, moved out to Kedgaon, and also arrived there from famine villages in the north. All the refugees, girls and women, had to be rehabilitated. Filthy, clad in rags, crawling with vermin, suffering sores and assorted other ailments, faint from malnourishment, and extremely pitiful, urgent action had to be organized. Volunteer students and staff from Sharada Sadan, directed by Soondarbai Powar, scrubbed each body and shaved every head before providing clothes and combs. Newly planted trees not yet grown served for what little escape from the burning sun was possible: 'Sunstrokes, fever, sore eyes, and other such things were inevitable . . . The girls lived in sheds not good enough for horses. Snakes crawled on their bodies while sleeping in the night. Numberless

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[49] Letter Jan. 1997: *The Widow's Friend* (1903), 135: cited by Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati*, 238; and Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 166–8. This Australian edition of *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1903) was edited, with a sequel, by Manoramabai. Of her own personal experience, Ramabai wrote: 'The agony and dismay I felt at seeing that sight cannot be told in words.' A *ser* or *seer* is a traditional measure of weight based on seeds that, varying from place to place and time to time, was standardized in 1833: 40 *sers*, each consisting of 16 *chhitaks*, would equal 1 *maund* (or *mān*; close to 1 pound). See C. H. Philips (ed.), *Handbook of Oriental History* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1951), 75, 78.

[50] *The Widow's Friend* (1903), 136–42: Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati*, 139–43; Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 167–8.

[51] Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati*, 235–9: *A Testimony*, 24.

scorpions, centipedes and other poisonous insects found their way into the bedding . . . and not a few were stung. But the good Father of the fatherless protected the children, so that no harm came.'[52] But physical need was only the beginning. Dealing with emotional and psychological trauma was more difficult. Many girls had backgrounds, customs, and habits not compatible with the community's peace. Hours of coaching, comforting, and counselling followed. This massive rescue operation profoundly altered Ramabai's entire work.

Thus was Mukti born[53]—both Mukti Sadan and Mukti Mission. A separate place for the Sharada Sadan compound probably began in 1896/7. This was not formally inaugurated until September 1898. Fresh funds, responses to special appeals, poured in from around the world. Dormitories, schools, a meeting hall, and other buildings sprang up. More land was acquired, more wells dug, and more land put into cultivation. What her father had once done on Mount Gangamal before she was born, Ramabai now more than replicated. Beside the Mukti Sadan and the Sharada Sadan, the Mission campus at Kedgaon soon provided buildings for the Kripa Sadan ('Home of Mercy'—for 'fallen' women), the Prita Sadan (for aged and infirm women), Sadanand Sadan (Home for Boys), and Bartan Sadan (Home for the Blind: who learned to read in Braille, along with useful crafts). By the turn of the century, 2,000 residents were occupying beds within various halls at Kedgaon. Most of these had been rescued from degradation, oppression, or starvation. They had been fed, cleaned, and nursed back to health. They had been taught to develop what gifts they possessed, to lead productive and useful lives—in teaching or in technical vocations, (e.g. agriculture, brick-laying, wood-working, printing, tailoring).

Ramabai's staff for these growing institutions, not counting those who managed the buildings and grounds, amounted to eighty-five women and girls: ten matrons, thirty-five teachers in letters and science, and forty-two in industrial crafts. In its first eleven years (1889–1900), the still steadfastly non-sectarian, neutral, and secular Sharada Sadan had trained some eighty high-caste (though decreasingly Brahman) girls to earn their own living. Sixty-five of these had either married or were earning their living as teachers and workers in different positions. Royalties from *High Caste Hindu Woman* paid for scientific and laboratory equipment, instruments and models, publication of illustrated science textbooks in Marathi, the bringing into

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[52] *The Widow's Friend*, 140–1: Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 169; Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati*, 242; Helen Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai* (London: Morgan & Scott, n.d.), 58.

[53] The term *mukti* (or *moksha*) has more than one meaning: 'salvation', 'release', 'freedom', and/or 'liberty'. Ramabai's use of the Liberty Bell as her logo and symbol epitomized her emphasis upon this concept.

being of a Braille system for Marathi, and the opening of a publishing house both for in-house needs and for commercial distribution.[54]

Christianity versus Christendom: Struggles over Mano

In earlier years, both Ramabai and the Ramabai Association had striven to fulfil the mandate of maintaining the Sharada Sadan as a totally secular institution. Thereafter, with no small regret, she and the Association changed its constitution. Henceforth it would be explicitly Christian. Yet, Ramabai's critics and foes, both Hindu and Christian, seem not to have realized that her conscience, grounded in deeply held convictions, would never have allowed her to take advantage of her position in such a way as to exert coercion or to make attempts to proselytize. She did not believe that genuine conversion was something that human agency could accomplish; but believed that only God could truly change and inwardly transform the human condition. Also, therefore, her critics never realized that Ramabai saw herself as both Hindu *and* Christian. She did not see the two as being, either essentially or necessarily, in conflict; nor did she see that she was betraying either her family or her nation. Her love for India and Indian peoples remained steadfast. It was the pole upon which her entire life's work turned. This being so, she never saw the British as superior or as worthy, in themselves, of emulation. She did not hesitate, therefore, to strike out boldly and publicly at degrading and inhuman treatment by plague officials and 'the shameful way in which women were made to submit to treatment by male doctors'. Such attitudes revealed that Europeans 'did not believe that Indian women [were] modest and in need of special consideration'.[55]

For this very reason, from a distinctly Indian perspective as a Christian, Ramabai again and again had head-on collisions with Sister Geraldine of Wantage. The underlying conflict was theological and ecclesiastical, with the same old arguments recurring. The central issue, at its heart, revolved around relationships to the Church, as defined by Geraldine and as this applied to the training of Ramabai's daughter 'Mano' (Manorama or Manoramabai). Having failed to control Ramabai, Geraldine was determined that 'the Church' should hold on to Mano: 'Individuals and nations who reject Catholic teaching, or who are only half-hearted or half-educated Christians are terribly afraid of the influence of the Truth . . . They fail to reason this out, but they are aware that given a free hand the teaching and influence of the Catholic Church are irresistible. The Church is the Truth,

[54] Shah, 'Introduction', *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, pp. xxvi–xxvii; taken from p. 362.
[55] Ibid. pp. 362, xxviii. For saying this, Ramabai was accused of sedition and castigated.

she teaches the Truth, she sets forth not a pittance of the Truth, but the whole Body of the Truth.'[56]

Like her mother, Mano had seldom known anything but change. Born in Assam, soon brought to Pune, enrolled in infant school at Wantage, she became the object of a furious clash over what Ramabai viewed as unfair indoctrination and usurpation of parental authority. Mano had gone with her mother to America, only to be sent back when her mother's incessant travel made adequate care impossible. She had been brought to Bombay to meet her mother in 1889. In 1891, after home schooling, she enrolled in the Epiphany School in Pune that was run by CSMV sisters. She studied under Mary Samuel, a gifted Jewish English teacher. After Miss Samuel became Head English Teacher at Sharada Sadan, Mano followed her there. In May 1896, just as she was about to take the Matriculation Examination of Bombay University, Sister Geraldine learned that Mano was going to the 'dissenting Chapel' of the 'Methodist Society' and then, that Ramabai was sending her to London to complete her studies.[57] When Geraldine then tried to press Mano into being confirmed, Ramabai wrote, 'Let the Holy Spirit do the work of converting and sanctifying her.' Mano was being taken to England by Alfred Dyer, a Methodist missionary of Bombay, with instructions to place her in North London Collegiate School for Girls 'to get the kind of education I want her to get'.[58] Geraldine retorted: 'I cannot understand why, having once brought your child to the Font to be baptized, and having heard the solemn exhortation, ''Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be Confirmed so soon as she can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments . . . ,'' you should now sweep aside your act and refuse your child that further Gift of Grace . . . namely, the seven-fold Gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby her intellectual faculties will receive illumination in the mysteries of the Faith. But since you refuse this inestimable privilege for your child, I would be the last person to put her into the difficulty of urging her to it contrary to your wishes . . . I do not, however, understand how in the matter of her following the Methodist persuasion you should consider that she is old enough to judge for herself, and yet in the matter of her Confirmation you do not consider her old enough to make a decision.'[59]

After Mano's arrival in London, when Geraldine pressed for her to visit Wantage, Dyer responded: 'Manorama is a true child of God and disciple of Jesus Christ; her mother is not dissatisfied with her religious state. As the terms in which Pandita Ramabai committed Manorama to my charge cause

[56] Shah, 'Introduction', *Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, 317–18.
[57] Ibid. 324–9: correspondence between Sister Benign, Mary Samuel, and Sister Geraldine.
[58] Ramabai to Geraldine (11 May 1896): ibid. 329–30.
[59] Geraldine to Ramabai (3 June 1896): ibid. 332–4.

her to stand in a position of a ward to me . . . I cannot allow her to go anywhere where she would be subjected to pressure to change the religious views which she holds.'[60] At the end of November, Ramabai wrote to say that she had been ill and that she had waited until she could find heart to open Geraldine's letter, adding: 'Let the differences of opinion alone. We serve the same Master and believe in the same God wherever we are. She [Mano] has joined the Methodist Church of her own free will and I do not want to disturb her in her belief or unsettle her mind. It is very harmful to unsettle the minds of the young—I have suffered a great deal from it. I believe in the Universal Church of Christ which includes all the members of His body, and am not particular about others being the members of different sects . . . And now I enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding and do not trouble myself with small matters of opinion and its differences. So please, let Mano alone in this matter.'[61]

This Sister Geraldine would not do. Complaining of 'nine months without so much as the courtesy of a visit from Mano', and having 'learnt from Mano the wicked, venomous and foul lies [without] a grain of truth with which he [Dyer] filled her mind, for the purpose of weaning her . . . such righteous indignation is kindled as cannot be extinguished.'[62] She then minced no words:[63] 'Your letter has caused me great pain . . . It is not I who wish to unsettle Mano's mind: it is you who *have already done so* . . . The same arrogance and wilfulness which characterized your life when you set up your own opinions against the Ministers of God's Church . . . —that same arrogance and wilfulness characterizes your life at the present time . . . Your *want of faith* in the teaching of the Catholic Church may arise from your loving the praise of men.'

Correspondence then lapsed for a year. For Ramabai, Christian faith did not entail Western Christendom. For her, Mano's faith did not entail words by others about what was best. Faced with accusations of sedition and blame for inciting the murder of plague officials, views which Geraldine shared, her hands were too full bringing many hundreds of famine victims to Mukti and caring for them. By the end of 1897, word reached Geraldine that 108 girls and women had been baptized *in the river* at Kedgaon, along with 116 'girl-widows and women' at Sharada Sadan, and that Ramabai too had been 'baptised by immersion' or 're-baptised'.[64] By then, Ramabai had moved a long, long way from High Church links in England, as well as from high-society and theologically liberal supporters in America. Despite dissenter

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[60] Geraldine to Dyer (11 July 1896) and Dyer to Geraldine (13 July 1896): ibid. 330–2.

[61] Ramabai to Geraldine (25 Nov. 1896): ibid. 334–7.

[62] Geraldine to Ramabai (14 Dec. 1896): ibid. 324; p. 350, 'nearly eight months' elapsed before Mano could 'revisit her friends at Wantage'.

[63] Ibid. 338–42.   [64] Ibid. 349–50.

and populist links, with strong 'Anabaptist' and Pentecostal overtones and occasions when some groups had tried to 'own' and 'use' her, Ramabai stoutly resisted all such ties and remained free of entanglements. This prompted Geraldine, on 'Advent' 1897, to send another letter with a 'grave' warning. But by that time, an exhausted Ramabai had already left India for America.

The occasion for this second overseas journey was the ten-year anniversary of the Ramabai Circles in America, in response to urgent invitations. Her two Methodist assistants, the American Minnie Abrams and the Brahman Soondarbai Powar, were to manage Sharada Sadan and Mukti Mission. Embarking in early January, she took along two of her most gifted girls, following three who had been sent the year before. She stopped in England only long enough to also bring Manorama along with her. Manorama was soon admitted to a women's college ('seminary') in North Chilli, New York. There, Mano did what was considered impossible by completing her college education in two years. She also won the friendship of fellow students, high approval from her teachers, and managed to help the five other Indian girls from Sharada Sadan to adjust and succeed. At her graduation (19 June 1900), Mano won first place, honours in all but two subjects, including extra science courses, and distinction as a pianist. But before she embarked for Bombay, the Ramabai Association commissioned Mano to take charge of the Sharada Sadan, with its nearly 200 students and its newly adjoined high school.

Manoramabai was only 19 when she became Principal of Sharada Sadan. Such a position for one so young put her in a delicate and potentially disturbing situation. Above her was a beloved and proud mother who, despite her tiny frame, was a brilliant and towering figure. Below her were Mary Samuel, the Head Teacher, and other teachers who were considerably older. Despite her successes, small difficulties and frictions were bound to arise, not to mention hidden jealousies. Ramabai counted on her constantly for correspondence and accounts, and expected her at Mukti at least once a week. The overall burden was so heavy that it began to tell on Mano's health. Even after a respite in the hills, her return to a rapidly growing school, with its problems, difficulties, and annoyances, exhausted her. By mid-1902, frictions with the Ramabai Association developed over the sale of the by then much enlarged property of the Pune Sharada Sadan. Ramabai's standing in the world at large opened possibilities of raising funds from other countries. To this end, and so as to rescue her beloved daughter from her predicament, Ramabai dispatched Mano and Minnie Abrams, another of her deputies, to represent their cause in Australia.[65]

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[65] Mary Samuel to Sister Geraldine (Pune, 12 Sept. 1902), ibid. 353–74: Having opposed moving from Pune to Kedgaon, Mary Samuel was no longer on Ramabai's staff.

Quests for Ultimate *Mukti*

Ramabai's early struggles for survival, her later struggles in India and England, America and India, can be seen as phases within a much larger personal odyssey—as stages along a long road toward spiritual emancipation. Her first Christian conversion, following her brief experience with the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta, had occurred in Assam. There she had encountered the Gospel for the first time. Her second conversion had been intellectual. In this process, begun with Nehemiah Goreh in Pune and continued in England and America, her Christian theology had become broad and liberal. Her third conversion, much more profound, had been much more clearly and deeply *bhakti* in nature. This more emotional and devotional 'turning' event, two years after her arrival from America, had taken place in 1891, while she was still in the midst of her dreadful struggle with reactionary Hindutva forces. Looking back sixteen years later, she would recount how her spiritual quest finally came to an end so that, at last, she had found a deep inner peace: 'Although I was quite contented with my newly-found religion, so far as I understood it, still I was labouring under great intellectual difficulties, and my heart longed for something better ... I came to know after eight years from the time of my baptism that I had found the Christian *religion*, which was good enough for me; *but I had not found Christ, Who is the Life of the religion and ''the Light of every man that cometh into the world''* [emphasis hers].'[66]

Unsatisfied after studying books about the Bible but not the Bible itself, she decided to read the Bible for herself, regularly. Then, one day in Bombay, she happened upon *From Death unto Life*, by an evangelist named Halsam, whom a lady had told that he was trying too hard to 'build from the top' without having 'experienced regeneration and salvation in Christ'. The words made Ramabai realize, suddenly, that she had failed to understand the most elemental and essential truth of all—namely, that she needed Christ, and not his religion. Like someone new born and groping in darkness whose eyes suddenly opened to a 'Great Light', she exclaimed:[67] 'O the love, the unspeakable love of the Father for me, a lost sinner, which gave His only son to die for me! I had not merited this love, but that was the very reason why He showed it to me.' By no merit could one earn heaven (*svarga*), nor by serving one's husband or some Brahman: 'No caste, no sex, no work, and no man was to be depended upon to get ... everlasting life, but God gave it freely to any one and every one who

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[66] Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony*, 26–8; Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 188–9; *Pandita Ramabai through her Own Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 309.

[67] *A Testimony*, 31. Also found in Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai's Feminist and Christian Conversions*, 189; and *Pandita Ramabai through her Own Words*, 'Finding Christ', 311–13.

believed in His Son Whom he sent to be the "propitiation for our sins." And there was not a particle of doubt left . . . I did not have to wait till after undergoing births and deaths for countless millions of times, when I should become a Brahman man, in order to get to know the Brahma . . . The Holy Spirit made it clear to me from the Word of God, that the salvation which God gives through Christ, is present and not something in the future.' This *bhakti* encounter with Jesus Christ, as Divine Son of God and Personal Lord and Saviour whose Redeeming Love opened her eyes to the Light, was the pivotal 'turning point' in her quest for *mukti*. She had 'come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as [her] personal Saviour', her life had become full of joy and song and a constant urge to 'tell others' of what God had done and could do in anyone's life. In due time the Mukti Sadan would become a Christian ashram and a vehicle for bringing hundreds of starving girls, regardless of caste, into the Mukti community.[68]

Fourteen years later, another 'turning' event—her 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit'—occurred. This began within the Mukti Mission itself, in the wake of news about 'revivals' or spiritual awakenings in Wales and in the Khasi Hills. As she explained: 'I was led by the Lord to start a special prayer circle at the beginning of 1905. There were about seventy of us who met together each morning and prayed for the true conversion of all Indian Christians, including ourselves, and for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Christians in every land. Six months from the time we began to pray in this manner, the Lord graciously sent a glorious Holy Ghost revival among us, and also in many schools and churches in this country. The results of this have been most satisfactory.'[69]

The event, referred to as the 'Great Revival', began among young women whose horrible experiences in early life and struggles to overcome deceit, falsehood, gloom, impurity, illnesses, sullenness, and miseries had driven them to despair. They suddenly exploded into loud and joyful outbursts of sight and sound—prayers, songs, healing, 'consuming fire', and 'speaking in tongues' (*glossolalia*)—sometimes unintelligible, sometimes meaningful. Ramabai listened and watched with quiet restraint. She feared that her words might be misunderstood. Even so, she confessed to herself ecstatic experiences that she could not explain: a consciousness of 'the Holy Spirit as a burning flame' within her. When alone in prayer, she involuntarily uttered sentences in Hebrew. But despite emotions 'too deep for sound or form', her strength of mind held her emotions in check and free from excessive turbulence. While not forbidding or hindering charismatic 'tongue speaking', her personal approach to such phenomena remained self-controlled. 'Love, perfect divine love,' she

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[68] *A Testimony*, 31 ff.   [69] Ibid. 42.

maintained, 'is the only and most necessary sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.' She quietly quoted prophecies and psalms, prayers and praises from the Old Testament, extolling the manifold goodness and mercies of God. She also spoke of apocalyptic visions, of waiting eagerly for 'the Lord's return' or 'the second coming of the Jesus Christ'.[70] Some were critical— 'wild fires' such as this did not fit earthly agendas of dominance and ecclesiology. One CMS missionary, L. B. Butcher, was cautiously open: despite 'tongue speaking', the Pandita had 'maintained a very sane attitude'. She avoided the extremes and sensationalizing to which some were prone. What mattered to Ramabai was hard evidence that the Holy Spirit was at work in the Mukti Mission: the 'true conversion of hundreds of women' and the 'full consecration of large numbers' to the 'the witness and work for Christ'.[71]

From 1905 onward, and for the remainder of her life, consequences of the 'Great Revival' continued to be evident, both in the inner life and in the work of Ramabai at Mukti. She herself came to be seen as a 'great soul' (*mahatma*) or 'living saint' by the many women who, from this time onwards, went out from Mukti into lives of service, or came as pilgrims. Pasted inside her Bible, for daily intercessory prayers, were blank pages with 'lists of hundreds and hundreds of her girls, whom she knew and whose needs she knew and whose cause she pleaded continually'.[72] The Pandita, having prayed with passion for a revival and having seen for herself the 'mighty awakening', kept up a constant refrain of playful thanksgiving, repeating words in the Gospels uttered by the beggar born blind: 'One thing I know, that once I was blind but now I can see.'[73] Ramabai had attained such a sense of personal *mukti*, such peace and tranquillity, both within herself and from forces outside her, that thereafter she not only survived each challenge, but thrived. She had seen for herself that neither the reactionary forces of Hindutva, nor the reactionary forces of Christendom, nor forces coercively liberal or populist forces, would succeed in crushing her spirit, defeating her mission, or exploiting her for other purposes.

For much of the last twenty years of her life, Ramabai devoted herself to her first love—namely, Scripture. Only now, her perspective had changed and her horizons had been broadened. Her father and mother, whom she still adored and whom she expected to see in Glory, had enabled her, as a child and later as a woman, even as a widow, to master what she called the 'Divine Language' itself and to appropriate an enormous corpus of its

[70] *Mukti Prayer Bell* (Kedgaon, Sept. 1907), 11: described in MacNicol, *Pandita Ramabai*, 116–19.
[71] MacNicol, *Pandita Ramabai*, 121.
[72] Ibid. 132, 116 ff.   [73] The Gospel According to John 9: 25.

classical heritage, much of it in her astounding memory. This had been her strong weapon in her war to end the oppression of high-caste child widows. But gradually her own understandings of ritual purity and pollution had also changed until, during her work among famine victims, her conception of humanity had radically changed. No human being was to be excluded from the blessings of liberty or liberation from oppression. Rather, all who were made by God and redeemed by God, through the sacrificial atonement of Christ, could be 'born again' or become 'twice-born' (*dvija*). Thus, none should be denied access to 'Divine Language'. But no longer was Sanskrit alone enough, or the only divine language. All language and all languages, as gifts from God, could be divine. Each person should be given immediate access to the 'Word of God' in that person's own mother tongue. This, in her view, meant that Marathi was potentially as divine and sacred as Sanskrit.

Insights gained from this realization consumed Ramabai's last years. The Marathi Bible was too heavily Sanskritized, too full of terms which the lowly, oppressed, and poor could not grasp, not because they were not intelligent but because these were not in their own mother tongue. The great task, therefore, was to bring the 'Word of God' down to the level of the common people of Maharashtra. Ramabai had only one life and only so much time. India's other languages she left to others. Many, such as Tamil and Malayalam and Telugu, already possessed biblical texts. With her remarkable ability to master new languages, and her command of other languages in India, Ramabai acquired an ability to consult Greek and Hebrew, as well as Aramaic and Latin. This was a huge task. But, with her gifted daughter and others running the Mukti Mission, she was free to pursue this project. Thereafter, day by day, month by month, and year by year, she toiled away. She had just managed to complete this task when Mano, her only child and potential successor, suddenly died. She was only too glad to follow Mano, and this she did, on 5 April 1922, before another year had passed.

Other Sample 'Trophies of Grace'

Pandita Ramabai Saraswati [née Dongre-Medhavi] (1858–1922), remarkable and unique as she was in many ways—a widowed woman from the highly and self-consciously elite Chitpavans (or Konkanestha) Brahman community of Maharashtra who became a world-renowned Christian—was far from the only high-caste, high-class person to become a renowned 'trophy of grace' for Christian India. There were others, each no less unique and notable, albeit in different ways. It is noteworthy that none of these, for the most part, would leave behind a new and self-perpetuating community of Christians whom they had helped to bring into being. Nor would there be many converts from

within their own 'high-class' (*sa-varna*) communities, no lingering legacy
within the community from which each had been converted. These 'Tro-
phies of Grace' were not from the hungry or illiterate, poor or polluting
(*āshuddham*) castes. Rather they came from among the high and learned, those
who from ancient times had served as vehicles for preserving an already
ancient civilization.

Stories of only eight of these highly visible, high-class converts need be
narrated here, simply to show what they represented. In vast areas of
northern and western India where Christian people, mostly converts from
the lowest and most polluting communities, were thinly spread, these were
individual converts of high visibility emerging out of a rich cultural legacy
who became noteworthy. Notable 'Trophies of Grace' described below
were mostly Brahman Christians and mostly Bengali or Maratha, except for
one notable Sikh Christian and one remarkable Muslim Christian, both of
whom were in the Punjab.

Krishna Mohan Banerjea (1813–1885)[74]

Born in Calcutta and fluent in English and Sanskrit, as well as his native
Bengali, Krishna Mohan Banerjea became a radical. This was a pattern
typical of many Bengali gentry (*bhadralok*) in the imperial capital. He
turned agnostic and then atheist, embracing reform movements and
editing a free-thinking periodical called the *Enquirer*, thereby openly
alienating and breaking with his family. After listening to lectures deliv-
ered by Alexander Duff, he became convinced of the rational validity of
Christian truths. After his baptism in 1832, and his ordination in 1836, he
pastored a congregation in the city until 1852 and then accepted a
teaching position at Bishop's College. For the rest of his career, he taught
philosophy and theology. He also engaged in producing and publishing a
wide range of literary works, many of them directed toward refuting the
fashionable Brahmanical thought of the day, both traditional and reformist
(e.g. Brahmo Samaj). Publication of his 1861 *Dialogues on Hindu Philoso-
phy*, membership in the Asiatic Society, and other honours heaped upon
him, such as serving as chaplain to the Anglican Bishop of Calcutta,
secured him a respected place within society, among both Bengalis and
Europeans.

[74] Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmil-
lan, 1998), 42: entry by Eric J. Sharpe; T. V. Philip, *Krishna Mohan Banerjea, Christian Apologist*
(Madras: CLS, 1982).

Kali Charan Chatterji (1839–1916)[75]

Another Bengali Brahman, Kali Charan Chatterji turned to Christ while attending mission school, an event that led to his being disowned by his family. After studying in Alexander Duff's institution, he became Principal of a Presbyterian school at Jullunder, in the Punjab. After further teaching in what would later become Forman Christian College in Lahore, he was ordained and then opened a mission work in Hoshiarpur, a station where he stayed for the remainder of his life. Ever an evangelist, whether in town or village, he led numbers of families to Christian faith, people from both high and low castes. As a consequence of his leadership and training of Christian teachers and pastoral helpers (catechists), a community of some 3,000 baptized Christians became firmly established. His career was crowned with honours: election to head of the municipal council, service as President of the Forman College Board of Governors (1886–1915), Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of India, and delegate to the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910). Firmly proclaiming the atoning death of Christ and salvation by grace through faith, he also became a strong advocate of indigenous Christian leadership, becoming so in opposition to alien missionaries, many of whom had become entrenched time-servers.

Lal Behari Day (1824–1894)[76]

Already mentioned in the chapter on education, Day became the biographer of Alexander Duff, under whose influence he had come to Christ. His great wish was to create an entirely indigenous and integrating National Church of Bengal. While he was not successful, his critique of inequities of missionary colonialism would, with help of other Bengali Brahman Christians, lead to formation of the Christo Samaj, patterned after the Brahmo Samaj, the purpose of which was to abolish denominational and doctrinal barriers imported by missionaries. Ordained as a pastor in 1855 and later employed as a Professor of English and in the Government College of Hugli, he became a well-known writer, both in Bengali and in English. His *Bengal Peasant Life: Folk Tales of Bengal*, originally published in 1874 as *Govinda Samanta; or, The History of a Bengal Raiyat*, is still in print. As a part of the Calcutta gentry (*bhadralok*), he contributed to the Bengali renaissance during the nineteenth century.

[75] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 127; J. C. R. Ewing, *A Prince of the Church in India: Being a Record of the Life of the Rev. Kali Charan Chatterjee* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1918); and John C. B. Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1976).

[76] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 172; G. MacPherson, *Lal Behari Day: Convert, Pastor* (Edinburgh, 1900).

Brahmabhāndav Upādhyāya (1861–1907)[77]

Fascination with the sinless life of Jesus gradually turned this Bengali Brahman to the faith. After baptism in 1891 as a High Anglican, he shortly turned Catholic. At that time he adopted the name Brahmabhāndav (instead of Bhawani Charan Banerjea); and soon after he also donned the saffron robes of a *sannyasi* and commenced the itinerant life of a mendicant. His great concern was to make Christian faith conform with Vedic philosophical traditions as handed down from Sankara, claiming that peoples of India needed to reclaim their own ancient monotheism and that they should abandon such aberrations as polytheism, pantheism, reincarnation, and idolatry that had crept in and corrupted what had once been pure. In this sense, in his effort to build a truly indigenous base for Christian theology, he can be seen as supporting the 'fulfilment' school of theology. After moving to Calcutta in 1898 and joining the nationalist movement, he began to say that he was a 'Hindu' by birth but a Catholic Christian by sacramental rebirth, reasserting caste disciplines of ritual purity. Avatars became, for him, transient manifestations of the realities of timeless divine power and eternity. Towards the end of his life, after he began to suggest that male and female deities of the pantheon were attributes of God and mounted attacks against missionaries, Catholics warned against reading his journal, *Sophia*. Nevertheless, Brahmabhāndav can be seen as falling among those Christian thinkers of India who insisted that Christianity in India had to be authentically rooted in the soil of India and should not contain elements that were not indigenous.

Nilakantha Sastri [aka Nehemiah] Goreh (1825–1895)[78]

The baptism of a Chitpavan Brahman in 1848, within the sacred pilgrim city of Benares, stirred up a furore. But this came only after he had written a severely critical work which attempted to silence missionaries and drive them to either quit India or direct their words only to Christians. In this work, entitled *Śāstratattvavomormaya* (1844), he hoped to vanquish Christian thought once and for all. But, instead, the opposite occurred. After reading *Matapariksha* by John Muir, Gore became convinced of the truth of the

[77] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 689; Timothy C. Tennant, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: The Legacy of Brahmabandav Upādhyāy* (Delhi: SPCK, 2000). B. [Brahmachari Rewachand] Animananda, *The Blade: Life and Work of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya* (Calcutta: Roy & Son, [1945]); cf. *Swami Upadhyaya Brahmabandav* (1908); Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmbandhab Upadhay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[78] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 252; Richard Fox Young, *Resistant Hinduism: Sanskrit Sources on Anti-Christian Apologetics in Early Nineteenth Century India* (Vienna: University of Vienna, Indological Institute, 1981), 101 ff.; Charles E. Gardner, *The Life of Father Goreh* (London: Longman, Green & Company, 1900).

Gospel. Gradually, over several years, his outlook as a Christian philosopher and theologian migrated from that of an Evangelical to High Church Anglicanism. This began after his visit to England in the 1850s, as tutor to Maharaja Duleep Singh, when he met Professor Max Müller and Queen Victoria. A pioneer in using indigenous, Brahmanical or *Sanskriti*, categories of thought to explain his faith, his most renowned work, *Saddarshan Darpan*, or *A Christian Response to the Hindu Philosophical Systems* (recently compiled and reintroduced by K. P. Aleaz (Kolkata: Punthi Pustak, 2003)), was a refutation of non-Christian alternatives. After moving to Pune and being ordained in 1870, he became marginally affiliated with the Cowley Fathers (Society of St John the Evangelist). Perhaps, as much as anything else, he may be remembered as the person whose sage counsel and sensitive nurturing was to be decisive in convincing Pandita Ramabai, in 1883, that Christian belief could be explained in cogent and rational terms.

Narayan Vaman Tilak (1862?–1919)[79]

Narayan Vaman Tilak was already a celebrated Maratha (Chitpavan or Konkanestha) Brahman poet and thinker before he became a Christian. His turn to Christian faith began when, on a train, he happened to meet a European 'sahib' with whom he had a long and interesting conversation about Sanskrit poetry. On their parting, after giving him a New Testament as a parting gift, his travelling companion prophesied that, within two years, he would turn to Christ. Months later, while at his workplace, he happened to have some extra time on his hands. With nothing handy to read, he picked up the New Testament he had been given and read the Sermon on the Mount. This so fascinated him that he then devoured the entire text several times. Later, he began to write anonymous letters and poems to *Dnyānodaya*, the leading Marathi Christian periodical of that day. Readers soon realized who it was that was confessing his coming to Christian faith. But, when the day finally came for him to be baptized, in 1895, he insisted on being baptized by an Indian and not by a foreigner. Thereafter, in his quest, or *parampara*, he strove to reconcile his personal faith in Christ with the best of his ancient and beloved *Sanskriti* cultural heritage. Widely respected, he dedicated himself to the emancipation of the oppressed and marginalized, especially non-Brahmans, untouchables, and women. From the end of 1912 until his death, he was editor of *Dnyānodaya*, an eight-page

[79] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 671; Malcolm J. Nazareth, 'Reverend Narayan Vaman Tilak: An Interreligious Exploration', 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Temple University Ph.D. dissertation, 1998). Lakshmibai Tilak (wife of N. V. Tilak), *I Follow After: An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 'Conversion', 122–9.

Marathi weekly operated by the American Marathi Mission. The enormous corpus of writings that he left includes, among other items, 254 hymns out of the some 700 Marathi hymns then in use, many of which are still sung. Like many other high-caste converts, he urged Indian Christians to shed all dependency upon foreign missionaries and to eradicate denominational divisions between congregations. During his last years, he became a *bhakta sannyasi*—severing associations with all religious institutions and giving up possessions and connections, except for his family and home. His dream of writing a great Marathi epic (*kathā*) on the life of Christ, which he entitled *Christavan*, was not yet completed when his days on earth came to an end.

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889–1928?)[80]

'Sadhu' Sundar Singh was a Sikh Christian convert whose youthful abhorrence of Christianity was followed by a 1904 vision of Christ that totally transformed his life. Despite brief association with a Franciscan affiliate and an Anglican college, he never accepted Western modes of thought or formal church institutions. As he explained his faith, 'Indians need the Water of Life, but not the European cup.' In due course, he became a wandering mendicant or *sadhu*, devoting his life to presenting the Gospel among remote hill peoples and doing so within a *bhakti* devotional idiom, adopting ascetic and ecstatic fervour and shunning the stuffy preaching delivered in what he called 'missionary churches'. After his captivating narratives, telling of daring adventures, dangers, hardships, and miraculous events, also appearing within the local Punjabi and Urdu Christian publications, caught the attention of the wider world, he received invitations to travel abroad. This began in 1918.

A flood of further books about him then appeared. B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Sadhu* (1921), saw Sundar Singh as a 'living mystic' or '*bhakti* saint'—a person whose analogies, anecdotes, and parables carried multiple layers of meaning. But, while some believed his stories, others, led by the Jesuit missionary Henry Hosten, did not. He himself seems to have been aware of the dangers of being made into some sort of *maharishi*. The inherent risk of being called a *swami* or 'lord' lay in diverting attention from the person and Gospel of Christ. Unlike St Francis of Assisi, he allowed himself to submit to no earthly authority. As a consequence, his later years were to be marred by controversy and ill health. Finally, in April 1929, he

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[80] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 651; A. J. [Aiyadurai Jesudasan] Appasamy, *Sundar Singh* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958); C. F. Andrews, *Sadhu Sundar Singh* (London: Harper, 1934); Mrs Arthur [Rebecca Jane] Parker, *Sadhu Sundar Singh* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1918; 7 edns.); B. H. [Burnett Hillman] Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Sadhu: A Study of Mysticism and Practical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1921).

set off for a mission to Tibet. He disappeared and was never again seen. His final days, therefore, remain somewhat clouded in mystery.

Maulvi 'Imad ud-din (1830–1900)[81]

In addition to Shaikh Salih Abdul Masih (1765–1827), the renowned companion of Henry Martyn (1781–1812), whose path of turning from Islam to Christ began with his reading of Martyn's translation of the New Testament and later becoming an itinerant preacher for the CMS, Maulvi 'Imad ud-din—'Pillar of the Faith'—was one of the most noteworthy converts from Islam in North India during the mid-nineteenth century. Descended from a family of Muslim scholars in the Punjab and strictly trained within traditions of high Islamic learning, he began his career as preacher in the central mosque (jama masjid) of Agra. There, prior to the Great Rebellion (Mutiny) of 1857, his vehement anti-Christian rhetoric aggravated already tense relations between local ulema and Christian missionaries. Later abandoning his position, he became a wandering sufi mendicant and faqir, ready to abandon all faith and tormented by his search for life's meaning. An intensive study of Urdu Christian Scriptures and other Urdu Christian materials brought him to Christ. From the time of his conversion onwards, he dedicated himself to being a Christian witness to the Muslim community. This quest, in due course, led him to becoming an ordained Anglican (CMS) clergyman and evangelist. He sought, by means of scholarly persuasion, to convince members of his own prestigious (ashrāfi) class within the Muslim community that his new faith rested upon old and genuine truths and that these could bring any person closer to God. In contrast to 'missionary theology' that rarely explored the depths of a genuine 'Muslim Christian theology', especially within Indian contexts, the writings of 'Imad ud-din provided Christians of India with fresh understandings of religious traditions in India. This was especially so since 'Imad ud-din was so prolific in the volume of his writings in Urdu, Arabic, and Persian.

Conclusion

Christian faith, transcending local cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and national barriers, has never been obliged to replicate narrow forms and patterns of

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[81] Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1,314; 'Imad ud-Din, 'A Mohammedan Brought to Christ, Being the Autobiography of a Native Clergyman in India', *Church Mission Intelligencer*, NS 6 (Mar. 1970). Avril Powell, '"Pillar of a New Faith": Christianity in Late Nineteenth Century Punjab from the Perspective of a Convert from Islam', in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communications since 1500* (London: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 223–55. Ernest Hahn, *The Life of the Rev. Malawi Dr. 'Imad un-din Lahiz* (Vaniyambadi,: 1978).

faith developed in other parts of the world. One form of Christian faith, as distinct from any other form, has never been bound by any single sacred language or any one sacred blood and land. Likewise, various sample 'Trophies of Grace' described within this chapter could never be bound or contained by one set of such bonds. Nor could the genomes of birth and earth be contained by the narrow demands of Hindutva as this later developed. Rather, in each case of the several 'Trophies of Grace' that gained renown in India, an individual's primal religious quest became engaged in that person's separate and unique encounter with the Gospel and cultural challenges that beset that quest.

Western Christendom, as this chapter has tried to show, could take only a limited credit for leading Pandita Ramabai in her quest for ultimate *mukti*. As with other 'Trophies of Grace' all too briefly considered here, the influence of Western Christianity was influential, if not important. Yet, each person's quest led to an 'indigenous discovery of Christianity'[82] that was crucial. Ramabai herself always felt that her quest had begun even before her own birth—with her own parents, especially her father. Determined not to accept what Christians in the West, in the name of either the Church or Christendom, tried to impose upon her, she was led to follow her own path until she herself, like a lost sheep, was found. That said, she remained passionately nationalistic and never ceased to see herself as 'Hindu', or as fully 'Indian'. In that sense, she was part of a Christian world that was not Western so much as it was indigenous, or 'Indian'. Much could be said for each of the other Indian Christian 'Trophies of Grace' whose Christian conversion and subsequent Christian witness has been described all too briefly here. Narayan Vaman Tilak, for example, felt that his own mother had given him many of those most deeply spiritual insights that, in the long run, helped him to recognize in Christian Scripture the very truths that she had enunciated.[83] For each, a deeply primal religious quest found its own response to the Gospel.

Not one of these 'Trophies of Grace' came out of an already existing Christian community. Not one was a member of well-educated classes of upwardly mobile leadership within the already well-established Christian communities. By the late nineteenth century, these new leaders were also beginning to emerge into public life as visible manifestations of a newly emerging and self-confident Indian Christian community. Such leaders were coming from scores of separate church denominations. A glimpse of such Christian leaders, and their influence, is to be found in works of such

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[82] Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–22, 73–4, etc.

[83] Tilak, *I Follow After*, 124.

scholars as Susan Billington Harper, Sebastian Kim, and Chandra Mallam-palli.[84] These were Christians who, from the 1860s onwards, would be taking the place of earlier generations of leaders, such as Muttusami Pillai and Vedanayakam Sastriar (one a Catholic and the other a Pietist Evangel-ical). Among later generations of prominent Indian Christian leaders were Abraham Malpan, Longri Ao, A. J. Appasamy, Vedanayagam Azariah, Pandipeddi Chenchiah, Chandaran Devanesan, Paul David Devanandam, D. M. Devasagayam, Narayana Muttiah, A. T. Pannirselvam, K. T. Paul, M. Ruthnaswamy, M. M. Thomas, W. T. Sattianadan and his renowned wife Ammal Arokiam, John Subhan, L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, and many more. Just to name or count these few fails to do justice to many more. Indeed, far too many other prominent Catholic, Evangelical/Protestant, and Thomas Christian leaders fall within this category than can be men-tioned here. In the late twentieth century, such non-Catholic Christian leaders as Russell Chandran, Samuel Kamalesan, Ben Wati, and Ravi Zachariah, the 'Billy Graham' of India, emerged. But these hardly scratch the surface. Much more research needs to be done on individual elite Indian Christians, as well as upon qualities and quantities of Christian leadership. Left out from consideration here is the name of perhaps the most renowned of all Christian leaders in India—namely Mother Teresa. This is not because both India and the world did not clasp her to their hearts. Not Native born, she came from a well-established community of Catholic sisters in Europe.

Yet, none of these names, however wide their acclaim and however much one might fervently wish to tell of their remarkable lives, were 'Trophies of Grace'. Rather, they were natural leaders within already well-established Christian communities. Leadership rising out of these communities would continue to multiply and proliferate, replenish itself, and expand. Mean-while, with only a few exceptions, such as the Mukti Mission that still exists, albeit in a rather static condition that has hardly changed during the past century, most of the much publicized 'Trophies of Grace' that served as interpreters between Christian and non-Christian India gradually melted away and disappeared, leaving hardly any community and scarcely a trace, except for their writings and writing about them that still continues to be published. Who can say whether or when any more of such 'Trophies of Grace' will arise or gain such prominence?

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[84] Chandra Mallampalli, *Christians and Public Life in Colonial South India, 1863–1937: Contending with Marginality* (London: RoutledgeCurzon [Taylor & Francis Group], 2004), 8–9.

14

ADIVĀSI[1] MOVEMENTS IN THE NORTH-EAST

What was written in Chapter 8 told but half the story. Only one category of peoples who, in Brahmanical or *Sanskriti* terms, were considered as polluting or 'impure' (*āshuddam*) have been accounted for. Beyond the many scores of castes that fell into the 'fifth' ('*panchama*') or 'colourless' (*āvarna*) category of castes within which movements of 'mass' conversion occurred, as described in Chapter 8, was another category of equally despised and subhuman, but also feared, peoples. These were known as *adivāsis*. It is possible to surmise that many if not most of the 'outcaste' (*āvarna*) communities who, for centuries, had been kept in servility and subject to upper-caste peoples had originally been *adivāsis*; but, whether by force or guile, had been 'domesticated' in order to provide 'pure-' or 'true-colour' (*sa-varna*) categories of peoples with a surplus of servile labourers and menials. *Āvarna* peoples had been reduced to a status hardly more elevated than barnyard livestock. It was such peoples who had made possible the labour-intensive irrigation systems of agrarian econ- omies of ancient and medieval times. It was such peoples who still toiled from dawn to dusk for a handful of raw millet. But when such peoples, in desper- ation, tried to escape into the forested hills and jungles, they faced dangers and hazards even more fearsome. Such lowly people, already famished and scrawny and without experience in forest lore, were hardly equipped to cope with such an environment. It was the *adivāsi* peoples, on the other hand, who had not only survived but, in some measure, still thrived in the wilds. Such peoples, lurking in the fastnesses of their forests, were feared. It was they who sometimes served as mercenary fighters, usually as bowmen, in the armies of some rajas.

It was in the dark forests and rugged terrain inhabited by the wildest creatures that *adivāsi* peoples had long ago learned to survive. However nasty, brutish, or short life in the wilds might have been, they had preferred the hazards of forest darkness and tiger-filled jungles to the snares, toils, and stigmas of dehumanizing bondage under *varnāshramadharma*. Despite not

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[1] *Adi-vāsi* = 'original', 'ab-original', 'aboriginal', 'scheduled tribal', or 'tribal' person, persons, or people.

having access to more advanced technologies, they had managed to escape the grinding wheels that continued to crush and pulverize *āvarna* peoples. *Adivāsi* peoples had not only remained free but continued to be powerful enough, within the remote fastness of their forests, to resist enduring conquest by, or dominion under, lords of the plains. As a consequence, through all the ages prior to modern times, they had never been Sanskritized nor Islamicized. Even as they had struggled for survival, often under extremely difficult circumstances of perpetual disease, famine, and war, they had never before been permanently subjected to the abject brutality and insecurity, oppression, poverty, and outright thraldom that *varnāshramadharma* would have entailed. The Wheels of Lord Jagannatha, 'Lord of the World', they did not acknowledge. *Adivāsis* lived along the forested slopes and escarpments of the frontiers. These peoples—perched on ridges of both the exterior and interior mountains of the continent—had never been conquered or regularly controlled by military or political forces. Logistic difficulties alone remained too formidable. Wide and long belts of mountainous exterior frontiers defined and marked off the entire continent of India, neatly separating it from the Eurasian land mass. These frontiers ran from the Hindu Kush and Khyber Pass, along the Siwaliks into areas of Assam surrounding the Brahmaputra Valley, and across into Burma and as far as the Thai and Chinese borders. Another chain of rugged and mountainous interior frontiers and impenetrable 'badlands' ran west to east across Central India neatly dividing the Deccan and the south from the north, while two other chains of mountainous interior frontiers ran down each coast, reaching nearly as far as Kaniya Kumari and, thereby, cutting off the Deccan from coastal plains. Just as mountain ridges had all but effectively cut off the India continent from the rest of Asia, so also thickly forested and rugged mountains had enabled fierce aboriginal tribes to fend off both Hindu and Muslim rulers. As a consequence, they had hitherto never become wholly subject to either *Sanskriti* or Islamic civilization. Forests and mountains within the continent itself were full of separate peoples: Bheels, Chambars, Khonds (Gonds), Korkus, Mundas, Oraons, Kochas, Patis, Maitori Rabhas, Santals, as also Chenchus, Hill Reddis, Yenadis (Edadis), Yerrakulas, Todas, and many scores more. (Only in the north-west had Pushtu tribes embraced Islam.)

For the most part, on the other hand, hardly a single 'tribe' among these *adivāsi* peoples was not, or is not now being, deeply influenced by Christian influences and institutions. So much has this been so that substantial majorities have turned to the Christian faith. So many have been movements of turning to Christianity among aboriginal, marginal, or frontier peoples that had previously opted to remain outside and beyond the reach of India's *Sanskriti* or Islamic civilizations that only a very few of the most significant of such movements can be described in much detail. Since the north-east contains the only states with Christian majority populations in all of India

and since Christians of this area, along with the large numbers of Thomas Christians of Kerala, retain a degree of cultural influence found nowhere else in India, this study will concentrate attention on them.

Mountain ranges almost entirely enclose the Assam Valley. These have been inhabited by many scores of fiercely independent peoples. Such has been the nature of their separation from each other and consequent isolation that many have been obliged to use sign language to communicate with each other—so distinct have been their separate languages. These forest peoples have, since time immemorial, lived in fortified bastions along the ridges of the mountains or within the thick forested fastnesses that protected each of them from each other and also greatly impeded easy conquest from the plains below. Among some of the names of distinct clusters of forest peoples on exterior frontiers of just the Assam Valley alone were the Boros, Daflas, Garos, Jaintias, Khasis, Kukis, Mizos, Meitei, Nagas, and Singhpo. Beyond them on the Burma sides of these same mountain chains were the Chins, Kachins, and Karens, with still other fierce tribes in the mountains between Thailand and Laos and parts of western China.

The conquest, annexation, and consolidation of the entire north-east began in 1826. This was provoked by a reckless Burmese monarch who, not knowing better, thought that he could conquer India and began his campaign by sending armies into Assam. With the Treaty of Yandabo (1826), ending the First Indo-Burman War, Assam was annexed to the Indian Empire. But this event yielded control over little more than the Brahmaputra Valley, whose peoples had long been preyed upon by fierce tribes coming from all the hills and mountains around them. The Valley was given a 'special' status; and two Chief Commissioners, David Scott and Francis Jenkins, successively ruled over Assam from 1826 to 1861. Both, in the fashion of the day, happened to be Evangelical Christians. As a means of protecting Assamese peoples, they encouraged a policy of government-subsidized education by missionaries among tribes who inhabited wild areas not yet under imperial rule. But this policy was countermanded by Company authorities in Calcutta and London who felt that the disadvantages of letting missionaries run schools among the hill tribes outweighed the advantages, since conversions might take place. Only with the Wood Dispatch of 1854 was this decision reversed and subsidies resumed.

What arms had so far never accomplished, at least for more than brief punitive incursions, the Gospel began to achieve. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, except for Islamic peoples along the western frontiers and Buddhist peoples on the northern frontiers, indigenously led conversion movements drew scores of separate tribal (*adivāsi*) peoples toward Christian faith in all of the eastern mountain frontiers. It is significant that, as a consequence, *adivāsi* populations in the seven states that now surround

Assam are predominantly Christian. Moreover, modern education and literacy in Roman script has not only given them easy cultural access to all of India but to the entire anglophone world. It is not possible to do justice to the histories of all these newly Christian peoples. The strategy being followed here, as in the previous chapter (13), is to provide a detailed and in-depth study of the Nagas, with the hope that this can serve as a representative sample or template for the understanding of other *adivāsi* tribes; and then to briefly summarize how the Gospel came to other *adivāsi* peoples.

Naga Christian Movements: A Paradigm of Metamorphosis

High atop a peak on a projecting spur of 'hills'—so called because all mountain ranges in South Asia pale into significance beside the mighty, snow-clad Himalayan ramparts to the north—the tiny new village of New Molong came into being. Perched 2,600 feet above the Assam Valley, the village gave its inhabitants a commanding view. Westward, just below freshly hewn log houses, a massive log gate, log palisades, and dry moats full of upturned spikes (*pongis*), were newly cleared fields for planting and grazing, lookout nests overlooking dark and deep forests and ravines. These plunged downward past lesser hillocks and carried rushing streams to the valley floor where the corrugated iron roofs of tea estates glittered in the sun. Beyond, across the shimmering bright green rice fields and waving belts of grasses, bamboos, and orchards, the mighty Brahmaputra, like a vast molten ribbon of shining silver, flowed hundreds of miles to the sea. And beyond this great river, more plains led to hill ranges, each mounting higher toward the skyline where, on a clear day, snow-clad peaks and ridges of the mighty Himalayas themselves glinted. If one turned south-eastwards behind the village, further mountain ridges could be seen, mounting rank on rank in the sun.[2] Behind Molung eastward were more deep ravines, with wildly dense and never-ending forests that stretched beyond the Chin and Kachin Hills of Burma.

Molong was the first wholly Christian community ever formed among Naga peoples. It was a 'village of refuge'. Its persecuted members had moved from the larger, sturdier, and better defended older village of Molung-kimong, or 'Old Molung' (aka Dekha-haimong in Assamese), to an uninhabited and empty hilltop, three hours' walk away.[3] The year was 1876. But the real story had begun years earlier.

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[2] Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner of India* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907 [Gauhati: CLS, 1978]), 35–9.

[3] Molung-ymchen ('Old Molung') vs. Molung-yimsen ('New Molung'). J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland* (Calcutta: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984), 209 nn. 1, 2.

This story began when Godhula, the eldest son of a low-caste washerman (*dhobi*), came to faith in Christ and was baptized through the influence of Nathan Brown (1807–86).[4] Educated by Miles Bronson (1812–83)[5] at the Christian Orphan School in Nowagong, he served as an evangelist within the American Baptist mission at Shibsagar. American Baptist missionaries had been invited to Assam when the Serampore (British Baptist) Mission failed to secure enough funds for the support of their own missionaries. When Nathan Brown, the first American Baptist missionary, had arrived in 1835, British officials had encouraged him to start a pioneer work in Sadiya, at the far end of the Assam Valley where the Brahmaputra disgorged waters from the Himalayas. But a chain of tragedies that ended in the Khampti uprising and massacre of the Company's garrison in 1839 had driven him to Jaipur and then to Shibsagar. He had established Assam's first printing press and its first periodical publication, *Orunodoi*.[6] But, when a mission deputation from America interrupted the work, Brown had resigned and left India in 1855. While Bronson also departed, he soon returned to his work at Nowagong. Godhula and his wife never ceased to be grateful for these early missionary mentors.[7]

It was in Shibsagar, to the south of the Brahmaputra,[8] that Godhula first met Subongmeren. The Ao Naga who regularly came down into the valley to barter was befriended by Godhula and his wife. Invited to live in their home, Subongmeren gradually absorbed essentials of their faith, learning of the redeeming love of a single, Almighty, and Everlasting God through the Grace of Jesus Christ. Within a few months, he accepted the Gospel and became a baptized believer. His decision was to be pivotal for Godhula. Subongmeren, wanting his own people in the hilltop village of Molung-kimong to share his faith, shared news about the fears and troubles of the village and then asked Godhula and his wife to consider the possibility of coming up to his village so that others could hear the Gospel.

[4] Eliza Whitney Brown, *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience among Remote Tribes, and Other Labors of Nathan Brown* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, [1890]).

[5] Harriette Bronson Gunn, *In a Far Country: A Story of Christian Heroism and Achievement* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, *c.* 1911).

[6] Jayeeta Sharma, 'Missionaries and Print Culture in Nineteenth Century Assam: The *Orunodoi* Periodical of the American Baptist Mission', in Robert Eric Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. Eerdmans, 2003), 256–73.

[7] *Missionary Register* (1839), 139; and *Missionary Magazine*, 19 (1839), 3, 16. Victor Sword, *Baptists in Assam: A Century of Missionary Service, 1836–1936* (Chicago: Conference Press, 1935), 34–40. Krishna Chandra Pal, William Carey's first convert, went to the Khasia Hills and, after some years, baptized the first two converts.

[8] 'Shiva's Lake' ('Shiva's Ocean'), whence the town took its name, was a huge, square, man-made temple tank.

People of Assam were terrified of Nagas, whom they associated with 'head cutting' and the dark unknown of demons and devils inhabiting the forest-clad mountains. For centuries they had suffered from countless predatory raids from Naga warriors, sometimes as many as four or five in a single year. The 'Ao Nagas' were but one out of some fifty separate and distinctive tribes, each with its own distinctive language and culture. Nevertheless, for many months, Godhula and his wife worked with Sub-ongmeren, endeavouring to learn as much as possible of his native tongue. Finally, in October 1871, he embarked upon his perilous venture into the hills. But he and his Naga friend had hardly reached the tea gardens at Amguri where they joined other Ao Nagas that had come down to the plains than the other Ao Nagas, on learning of Godhula's wish to accom-pany them into the hills to live in their village, did their best to dissuade him. None of them were village officers (*tartars*); and they had no authority to bring a total stranger into the midst of their fortified village. Centuries of experience had taught Nagas to suspect all strangers. The Ao Nagas informed Godhula that they could not vouch for his safety after he reached their village. When Godhula persisted, they relented, promising to guard him along the way.

The journey took two days and one night. While sleeping in the forest, camp fires burned and guards stood watch. The party had to clamber up slopes that 'no elephant or horse' could ever climb. When they finally arrived at the village of Molung-kimong, Godhula was taken before village lords, and his presence was explained. The lords were not happy. Perhaps he was a spy, someone who by guile had talked his way into the village to assess their defences. Godhula was immediately placed in custody within a small hut; and armed guards stood watch day and night to make sure that he would not try to escape. Clearly, in Naga country, it was not safe for anyone to come who was too closely identified with anyone from Assam or with the Raj.

While he was in confinement, Godhula lifted up his voice and started to sing. He had a deep voice and loved to use it. With melodious songs of praise to God, he prayed for his captors. Nagas, he knew, loved music, especially vocal music. Two years earlier, when Edward Payson Scott, an American Baptist missionary, had been surrounded by the poised spears of some Naga warriors as he approached their village, he had taken out his violin and sung, 'Am I a soldier of the Cross' and 'Alas, and did my Saviour Bleed'. Entranced, his listeners had driven their spear points into the ground and asked for more.[9] So now also, each day people came and listened to

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[9] Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland* (Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1976, 1983), 49. Robert C. Torbet, *Venture of Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1955); *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (1913), 53. Naga Christian choirs, singing Bach cantatas and Swedish Baptist hymns, still make occasional international concert tours.

Godhula's songs. Each day, as they responded to his tunes with amiable comments, his fluency in the Ao Naga language improved. His warm personality and goodwill impressed more and more villagers, especially women and children. They responded to his calm assurance, good humour, and insights with increasing respect. As numbers of hearers increased, he shared his faith, and taught Gospel truths, trying to connect Naga under-standings of their own unseen world, where concepts of a distant High God collided with personal fears of malevolent local demons, with biblical concepts of an Almighty Lord of All Creation, who ruled over all things, both seen and unseen. He turned their belief structures upside down, arguing that God was not distant, indifferent, and uncaring, but that God loved them and that God could and would surely defeat and destroy all malevolent local devils and demons.

At last, after release from confinement permitted him to live freely in the village, Godhula informed the villagers of his wife and home in Shibsagar. After hearing that he had never intended to bring harm to the village and that he would be leaving as soon as they allowed him to go, his listeners became distressed. When the day of his departure arrived, many wept and begged him to return and to live with them. Forty armed warriors, spears and axes in hand, personally escorted him all the way back to Shibsagar. In Shibsagar, the district officer and missionaries stared at him in astonishment. They had given him up for dead, assuming that he had literally 'lost his head'. Hence, his grand appearance, with a retinue of ceremonially dressed armed guards, became a matter of wonder.

From that time onwards, Godhula made more and more trips to and from Molung-kimong. In due course, his wife Lucy joined him, working along-side him as a teacher. The missionary couple settled, and became accepted as members within the community. Their boldness and courage, musical skills and winsome ways, inspired admiration and affection. Godhula's message, that the Great God of All Creation was neither distant nor indifferent to the plight of any Naga man, woman, or child, that God had redeemed mankind by sacrificial and substitutionary atonement of the blood of his Beloved Son (*Yesu*), and that God would send his powerful Spirit to enter into the life of any person who turned to him in the name of Yesu, stirred minds and won hearts. The idea that this caring God was also more powerful than all the malevolent local demons and gods who surrounded them, and that faith in this God could bring them greater security than anything they had previ-ously known, grew stronger.[10] In due time, at Godhula's bidding, a small

[10] Richard M. Eaton, 'Comparative History as World History: Religious Conversion in Modern India', in *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (Oxford: Oxford Univercity Press, 2000), 60–72; *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 21: 1 (1984), 1–44.

bamboo chapel, as a place of worship and learning, was erected by the Nagas themselves. Six months later, Godhula went down to Shibsagar accompanied by nine newly converted Ao Naga Christians of Molung-kimong. There, on 11 November 1872, they were baptized and became the nucleus of the world's first Naga Christian congregation.[11]

At this point, Dr Edward Winter Clark, the American Baptist missionary in Shibsagar, decided that he himself might safely make a personal visit to the new Ao Naga Christian community of Molung-kimong. His great caution was justified. Etched in his mind were understandings of what had happened between 1838 and 1840, when Miles Bronson started a school for one or two Naga converts, using a simple Naga word book and catechism. Illness, death, and the massacre at Sadiya had destroyed the previous mission; and he had moved to Nowagong in 1841. Again, in 1851, an Ao Naga whom S. M. Whiting baptized had immediately been killed. Thus, he knew that all earlier Naga converts had lost their lives. But, on his arrival, grateful villagers quickly erected a simple structure to accommodate him. Made of woven bamboo walls, it was ready for habitation by nightfall. On 23 December 1872, he listened as fifteen more Ao Nagas professed their faith in Christ and then were baptized. The first Naga Baptist church had been born.

For Clark himself, his first trip into Naga country was a life-changing event. Of this he wrote: 'I believe that I have found my life-work.'[12] On return to Shibsagar a month later, Colonel Campbell, the British officer in charge at Shibsagar, quipped about how he somehow managed 'to keep his head'. The American missionary well understood how Naga peoples had always in the past jealously clung to their independence, and how tenaciously they had resisted intruders or outsiders who tried to rule over them. Naga warbands were still making frequent raids and forays into lowlands of the Assam Valley. They were taking captives and heads. Company troops who retaliated with punitive expeditions into the hills often suffered losses. Thus, for Clark to venture into the Naga Hills beyond the protection or the jurisdiction of the Raj, into areas where no Union Jack had as yet been hoisted, was seen as foolhardy. Even so, three more years would pass before he finally managed to screw up enough courage to make a permanent move up to his new hilltop abode in Molung-kimong village. During all that time, Godhula and his able wife Lucy continued to provide the pastoral care and steady instruction to the new congregation. He taught the boys and young men, while she set up a school for girls, women, and children. From among

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[11] H. K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India: A Documentary Study* (Guwahati-Delhi: Spectrum Publications, 1986), pp. xvi–xvii; letters from local missionaries and government officers, 231–67. Clark, *A Corner of India*, 5.

[12] Clark, *A Corner in India*, 15, 26.

the best and brightest of these students came the first Naga Christian leaders. These leaders, initially also known as 'Helpers' (or 'Catechists'), had to be patiently trained in how to care for their young flocks. Thus it was that, beyond the protection of the imperial government and by means of Native agency, this community of Naga Christians began to grow. A pattern had been set for how subsequent expansions of Christian faith among Naga tribes would take place.

But all did not always go smoothly for the new community. There were cultural, social, economic, and political difficulties and troubles to be faced. By the time of Clark's arrival, the rapidly growing little community had already begun to arouse serious resentments. These became increasingly vocal among those within the Naga leadership who saw the new faith as a threat to the old ways, if not to the very survival of the village itself. Especially offensive and provocative, for example, was the setting aside of one day in every seven as a Sabbath Day for rest and worship. This disturbed the political economy of the village. It took workers away from their assigned tasks, whether tilling soil, herding livestock, standing guard, doing essential household work, caring for children, or performing other important tasks. Long-established customs, such as the *morung*, the institutionalized system of segregating rambunctious young men and teenage youths, housing them in special quarters (long-houses), where they could partake in activities that prepared them for war or in celebrations that involved intoxicants, were being frowned upon by the Christian missionary. Other mundane matters, beyond village preservation and security, also bothered astute leaders. Molung-kimong faced deeper troubles. Amounts of tillable lands were becoming limited; soils were all but exhausted from overcropping; and timber lines lay further and further away, in places less secure. Prospects of poverty loomed for weaker members of the village. Indeed, the possibility of moving the whole village to the new site had already been considered. Yet, only after conversions among increasing numbers of Naga Christians within the old village did internal pressures and tensions seriously undermine civic coherence and tranquillity.

Also disturbing was the very presence of a 'white face'. This seemed to foreshadow a greater, yet unseen threat. Most Naga peoples had never before been subject to alien rule. To make sure this never happened, each 'village-state' constantly kept itself in a state of vigilance. Jealously guarding autonomy, and boasting about the freedom in which they had gloried for so long, Ao Nagas were determined not to compromise their independence. The 'white face' represented danger.[13] This stranger might well be a spy, an

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[13] Clark, *A Corner of India*, 17.

agent for the Raj that had already established its dominion in Assam. The new teachings that were spreading like wildfire might just be a ploy. The pen that was reducing their language to written form for the first time ever could store information about them that might someday be used against them. Even the Christian message, about love and peace for all mankind, could be construed as undermining the old ways, and weakening defensive preparedness and military strength. All these things portended the possibility that someday the 'good' wars, skull houses, and means of gaining personal glory, honour, and booty might end.

Matters came to a head when two young warriors of the *morung*,[14] whose prowess and skills made them potential future leaders of the village, became Christians. Each village had its own *morung*. This was a combination barracks, guard-house, and lodge, located near the village gate, where youths and young men of the same clan slept before they were married and moved into separate dwelling places with their wives and children. This was also a cultural institution—for the discipline and training of young warriors, for an elaborate sequence of feasting marking the ritual year, and a vehicle for conveying honour and social mobility, since both feats of prowess and feasts of celebration, accompanied by the drinking of rice beer, lifted a person's prestige and political influence in the eyes of his peers.

The two gifted youths who had turned to Christ began to initiate actions and policies that were viewed as undermining the warlike spirit and strength of the village. When they also began to engage in vigorous evangelizing among the non-Christian elements of the village, some non-Christians began to resist all Christian activities, by means both covert and overt. Then when various forms of harassment, petty vexation, and persecution failed to halt the radical movement in their midst, opponents decided to resort to more direct forms of protest. A war party within the *morung* launched a 'head-hunting' expedition, with the hope that a new collection of freshly cut human heads would both bring new honour to the village and deter further conversions. But the war party returned empty handed and racked with fevers, sores, and wounds; and when their various maladies merely provided means for new medical skills, open opposition to Christians collapsed. Yet, resentment against Christian culture continued.

What happened next brought about a crisis in Naga affairs and became a defining moment in Naga history. The Christians of Molung-kimong met together and quietly organized. Anxious to defuse tensions and restore peace within the village, they decided to depart from Molung-kimong

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[14] Eaton, 'Comparative History as World History', 57. See Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return of the Naked Nagas* (New York: Vikas, 1976), 47–50; and Julian Jacobs et al., *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), ch. 3, 'The *Morung*', 27–32.

and establish an entirely new village. Their new settlement would be a 'village of refuge', a place where believers might henceforth live according to Christian principles without being disturbed. As soon as they gathered and began to pack their meagre belongings and their actions became known, they quickly encountered strenuous objections and attempts to prevent them from departing. On the day of their departure, over loud objections, while insults and threats were being hurled at them from above, Christian families, together with their livestock and possessions, walked out of the great gate of Molung-kimong and began their trek towards an uncertain future.

The empty peak to which these families climbed was called New Molung (Molung-yimsen). Thickly forested, it was a wilderness haunt of elephants, tigers, leopards, serpents, and lesser foes. After arriving late in the afternoon of 24 October 1876, the colonists spent two nights with nothing but the starry sky for their canopy. They dared not risk being discovered by villagers dwelling on peaks that surrounded them. The biggest danger was the possibility that adventurous young warriors wanting to enlarge their village's skull house might make a raid before they could erect their stockade defences—palisades, a main gate, and a dry moat armed with sharp, spike-poisoned bamboo stakes. They dared not light a fire that might emit smoke or burn too brightly. As work progressed, slant-roofed shelters were open only toward the Assam plain. Even so, days passed before forests on the peak could be cleared away, a stockade erected, and fields for cultivation or grazing cleared. That the colony was not destroyed they saw as a miracle—a sign of protection by the Almighty.

Meanwhile, back in 'Old Molung' (Molong-kimong, or Molung-ymchen), consternation increased. The enraged village chief (*tartar*) and rulers, having done all in their power to defeat the new colony and to bring the secessionists to their senses, felt endangered. The loss of so much manpower or weapons was, in itself, a blow to village resources—with economic, political, or military implications. Also, village pride and prestige had been cut to the quick, replaced by lower self-esteem and public shame. In their distress, the village rulers turned to other Ao Naga villages for help. They wanted to punish the deserters and force their return. Their own story of what had happened was spread abroad in all directions, with hopes that they might be able to instigate assaults against the tiny new colony.

According to time-honoured traditions, the founding of any new village required consultation and approval from some larger and older 'parent' or 'super' village. Since well-established villages tended to resist any moves that might, thereby, reduce their resources and weaken their defences, assertions were circulated indicating that the 'parent' village disapproved of the new settlement. Ao Naga protocol required approval not only from those who

ruled Old Molung (Molung-ymchen), but also from those who ruled the much larger, and the still more powerful, 'foster–parent' village that had founded Molung-kimong. This village was Sungdia. Sungdia was a famous 'war village'—one of the most powerful of all Ao Naga villages. A 'war village' within a Naga tribe was one of the most dominant and powerful villages of the tribe. Famous and/or feared for being a highly militarized 'war machine', it had extended its sway over smaller and weaker villages and, in combination with other 'war villages', had organized military campaigns against other tribes and against peoples in the valley. In living memory, Sungdia had never known military defeat. Thus, when appealed to by Old Molung, Sungdia sent a message indicating its disapproval of building any new village and commanding secessionists to immediately return to their old homes. In justifying this command, Sungdia pointed out that the long-term costs to Ao Nagas would not be worth the effort: blood would flow and skulls would be lost, so that Ao Nagas might be weakened in relation to the other great war tribes. Sungdia's war record was such that any village receiving such a message would tremble. Sungdia's words made it clear that leaders of the Christian village had no option but to comply. They faced a terrible choice: acquiesce or be destroyed. In that darkest hour, members would later tell how the community turned their faces to the ground and lifted their voices to heaven in cries for help, strength, and wisdom.

At last, after careful thought and discussion, a consensus was reached and words of a highly courteous, deferential, and delicately phrased reply were drafted and sent to the lords of Sungdia. The import of this message from the New Molung community was bold, courageous, and sagacious: 'We remember, Sungdia, with much gratitude your kindness to the Dekha-Haimong [Molung-kimong] people, of whom we are a part. Time and again you have fought for us when in peril; we have only thankful hearts to you-ward. We desire most earnestly to perpetuate the pleasant relations of the past, and to remain under your parental watch-care. A little handful of us have come off from Dekha Haimong to form a new community, where we may worship in peace and quiet the one true God, of whom we have so recently heard. He is the great God who made heaven and earth and all things. Heretofore success has ever crowned your arms, but you cannot fight against the great Jehovah. Beware, we as your loving children entreat you. The white man's object here is to give you the very richest of blessings; for this only has he come. [Please] Believe this!'[15] With bated breath, the Christian families at New Molung waited. At Sungdia, a three-day conference took place. During the vigorous

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[15] Clark, *A Corner of India*, 23.

discussions that ensued, leaders in Sungdia learned that false rumours had been spread, that misrepresentations had been used to mislead them. In their reply to the new colony, the lords of Sungdia not only avowed strong bonds of friendship but also gave their pledge that, henceforth, the war village would support the new venture.

Many in both villages, Old Molung as well as New Molung, were enormously relieved by this peaceful resolution to the conflict. The courage and firmness of the missionaries, both Godhula and Clark, had also made a strong impression on all observers. Here were strangers who had been prepared to risk their own lives for the sake of their Naga friends. More and more permanent houses went up, more forest lands were cleared, and rice cultivation went forward. One family after another among those who, from fear, had remained behind in Old Molung, now decided to join the new village. Still other Christians elected to remain behind in the old village, where more conversions occurred. With such reassurances, Clark's wife Mary decided to join her husband. Her travel into the hills required her sometimes being carried on the back of an Ao Naga Christian, sitting in a specially constructed 'back-chair' (or 'back palanquin')—whimsically called her 'pull-man'. Her arrival, seen as a truly significant symbol of long-term commitment, prompted villagers to enlarge the house that they had built for her husband. This home, while possessing an unheard of 'three rooms' divided by flimsy bamboo and rattan walls, doors, and windows, with sparse furnishings, was seen as revolutionary by many Nagas. Modern conveniences and belongings were kept in tin boxes and trunks.

From this time onwards, a whole new order began to develop. This not only became manifest within the village of New Molung itself, but within other Naga villages—in ever widening concentric circles of Christian influence. No longer were great and expensive ceremonies and rituals, with blood offerings to propitiate village deities and demons, so acceptable; nor, as time went on, were these even tolerated. No longer did campaigns of aggressive warfare, with customary hunting of heads, find favour. Rather, Christian communities became known as champions of peace, committed to spreading tranquillity. No rule of law prevented those who settled in the village from worshipping as they chose. Nor was there any law requiring residents to be Christians. Yet, the pervasive culture and spiritual ethos of the village became increasingly Christian. This was symbolized by the erection of a cross in a prominent place, where all could see it and understand that the commitments made by Christians within the village were now central to its culture.

Meanwhile, new institutions also arose in New Molung. Beyond those that were traditional were some that were entirely new and modern; but

many others, in one way or another, represented a blending of old and new, with old forms tending to cloak new content. New Molung, like any Naga village, was entirely self-governing. By means of village consensus, generated through elemental forms of 'democratic' decision making by an 'elected' ruling council and officers, a village chose its own 'headmen' (*tartars*), one of whom usually became predominant as chief. Other leaders served as civil magistrates or military commanders, either for limited terms or for life. All officers sat together as members of a common council. Officers had powers of 'taxation'—by which they could commandeer labour or materials needed for the well-being of the whole community. They were paid for their efforts by perquisites of office in much the same way. All higher offices—whether civil, military, priestly, or whatever—were to be held by the most experienced and mature members of the community. Younger persons were selected either from the *morung* (a common residence for as yet unmarried young men) or from among younger householders. Great oratorical power, along with rhetorical gifts and skills, were required for political success. On public occasions, each officer was decked out in distinctive tribal regalia, with a colourfully decorated blanket gracefully draped over his right shoulder in such a way as to enable his other hand to make dramatic or eloquent gestures—sign language being essential when an alien tongue could not be understood. At the same time, the right hand would grasp a long, decorated spear. This could be banged on the ground to give emphasis to words being spoken. On some occasions, spears of all who met within a council hall might be ceremonially thrust into the ground just outside the door, thereby symbolizing peace and harmony within the village. Similarly also, visitors who called might thrust their spears into the ground as 'calling cards'. Nothing seems to have mattered more to a Naga than fame, glory, and honour. Among symbols of public recognition, bravery and courage ranked at the top. This was why heads were hunted and 'skull houses' enlarged. In pre-Christian villages, all heads counted, especially the heads of women which, with their long black hair, were prized as trophies of war. Such trophies, with tufts died red or yellow, adorned spear shafts and axe handles; boar-tusk or cowrie-shell necklaces also bespoke valour or wealth. Men were seen as 'cows' or 'women' until they contributed to a skull house; and their women would lift their voices to trill over such prizes. Slaves taken in war were used to pay off indemnities Since Nagas, from time immemorial, had lived in a Hobbesian 'state of nature', where war of every village against every village, and every tribe against every tribe, often made life 'nasty, brutish, and short', all members of a village community (*sang*) had to be ready, on the instant, for armed combat.

It was for this reason that bastions on hilltops were carefully selected, planned, and built. With defence in mind, watchtowers overlooked strategic points, with guards and sentinels everywhere. As men cultivated their fields, weapons and shields were close at hand. Women and children, when going outside the stockade for water or firewood, never went alone. Mothers working fields left little ones to older children, with instructions on how to hide. When drums sounded, all were to know exactly where to go and what to do. Safe travel outside the village depended on how large and well armed the travellers were. During times of hostility, Nagas slept with knees bent and axes in hand.[16]

At the centre of New Molung was the school house. This was the point where pioneer American Baptist missionaries Edward and Mary Clark played a crucial role. They laid the foundations of Naga literacy for the entire community. Mary herself put it, 'Two of the most intelligent men of the village were chosen to come . . . morning by morning to talk with us, rather to permit us to pick from their mouths, or throats it seemed, their unwritten language.'[17] Each man was given one rupee for eight sessions, with accounts marked on a rattan on the bamboo wall. By constant and careful conversation and consultation, checking and cross-checking for verification, meanings, nuances, and idiomatic expressions were corrected. Mastery of the Ao Naga language was an ongoing process. By this means, an Ao Naga dictionary and grammar came into being. A momentous decision was made, with far-reaching implications, both for Nagas and for India: namely, the reduction of the Ao Naga language into Roman rather than *Deva-Nagari* (*Sanskriti*) script and print fonts.

Prior to the Clarks' coming into the hills, Naga Christians had received the Gospel from Godhula and his wife Lucy. Since their mother tongue was Assamese, they had conveyed knowledge in Sanskritized idioms. But Naga prejudices against *Sanskriti* idioms were deep. In the face of 600 years of unhappy proximity to the Sanskritized culture of the Ahom civilization, Nagas had deliberately insulated themselves from that culture. But as Naga Christians became better acquainted with these two missionary couples, one Assamese and one American, who unstintingly gave of themselves, even at the risk of their own lives, Naga minds opened to new ideas—to spiritual understandings imported from afar and then modified to fit their own world views. Thus, American Baptist missionaries who had found the Assamese so impervious to the Gospel were amazed to find that Naga hearts and minds were so open and so ready.

[16] Clark, *A Corner of India*, 45–8.
[17] Ibid. 84.

Literacy in their own mother tongue, together with literacy in English as a second language (and Assamese as a third), was like cultural dynamite. When whole villages became literate, this dynamite exploded, catapulting Nagas from the stone age into the modern world.[18] The strategic significance of total literacy for this still infant Christian community could hardly have been fully appreciated. With emphasis on practical knowledge aiming to provide tools for good health and material well-being, an almost entirely new Ao Naga language was grafted onto the old language. This was loaded with technical terms for new implements and products. Then, for those whose literacy advanced to higher levels, English was introduced. For the very first time, a Naga could thumb through an issue of *Harper's* magazine or look with wonder at an advertisement for new farm tools, and ask questions about what items might be imported. Working long hours day and night, aiming first to produce a simple dictionary and a grammar, and then to provide more and more sophisticated translations of Scripture and textbooks (eventually by means of a hand press sent out from Boston), missionaries brought about an intellectual revolution among Naga peoples. Totally literate, modern Naga communities, with glass windows and more comfortable furnishings in their houses, including rifles in their hands, became the envy of other Naga tribes.

The new colony of Molung prospered and rapidly grew. Families from other villages came and settled, bringing their older beliefs and rituals with them. Soon there were more than a hundred houses. Other villages, seeing the astounding prosperity of this settlement, soon invited the missionaries to visit them, and then asked for teachers to come and live among them. To begin with, there were not enough trained Ao Nagas to meet such requests. Some Assamese Christians had to be recruited. Outstanding among new Naga 'Helpers' were Zilli and his wife Jointa. Among Zilli's early accomplishments was a full-fledged concert. In the bamboo chapel lit by lanterns recitations were given and hymns sung. Another full-fledged Ao Naga teacher was Tungbangla, a young woman who, with her friend Noksangla, had been among the first schoolgirls of Molung. After her marriage, she and her husband had moved to Yazang where she started her own small school. This grew into a congregation. An elderly Christian from Molung came to be its pastor; and a chapel and house were built to accommodate him. Among the first batch of Ao Naga preachers was Edeeba. He was able to

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[18] For elucidation of technical aspects of this process, see Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992). Also, see Brör Tilliander, *Christian and Hindu Terminology: A Study of their Mutual Relations with Special Reference to the Tamil Area* (Uppsala: Alongvist & Wiksell, 1974), for comparative insights on problems of translating concepts and how indigenous meanings are transformed.

hold his listeners spellbound, taking them from the story of the great atonement for all sin by 'Yesu Kreestu' to the Resurrection and Pentecost.

On one occasion, oath-bound warriors plotted against Clark and God-hula, only to have their plans foiled by the arrival of sturdy warriors who stood guard over them. Political troubles again disturbed Christian work when messengers appeared to say that two Molong men had been speared. After the Deputy Commissioner in Shibsagar, Colonel Campbell, arrived and officers of Templu, the offending village, paid a heavy fine, swearing that depredations on Molung paths would cease, the event was celebrated with prayers of thanksgiving and with Molung's bodyguard turning out to parade in full regalia.

Such troubles served as a catalyst for further rapid expansions of Christian influence among other Ao Naga villages. Notable among these large and prosperous Ao Naga villages was Merangkong—the village where a con-version had occurred twenty-five years earlier. A leader from that village came to the Christian congregation in Molung and publicly announced: 'In Merangkong on Sundays, hundreds of people, men, women, and children, come together to hear what I can tell them about the Christian religion.'[19] This imposing figure, Imrong by name, had a deep voice and fiery rhetoric, such that he eventually gained renown as an itinerant preacher. Imrong liked grand public displays. Not long after, he marched to Molung with 250 men at his back, all dressed in ceremonial regalia, with war axes rattling in their sheaths, shields on their shoulders, and long spears in their hands, for the sole purpose of expressing his Christian faith. Imrong's coming to Molung in this manner, largely as a matter of ceremonial display, became a notable diplomatic event. Protocol required that notables of Molung also visit Merangkong. Behind this event was an earlier incident—namely, the discovery at the gateway of Old Molung (Molong-kimong, New Molung's mother village) of a broken *pongee* (sharpened bamboo spike, normally poisoned) and an extinguished firebrand. Such a 'flinging down a gauntlet' was nothing less than a declaration of war by the people of Templu that had led to the killing of the two warriors of Old Molung several months earlier. The large delegation from Old Molung to Merangkong, accompanied by a full retinue of warriors in ceremonial regalia, included both Clark and Godhula. Its purpose was to prevent war between Old Molung and Tem-plu. The visit was fraught with danger. At any point along the dark path, a veritable tunnel of creepers, vines, and overhanging boughs, an ambush of flying arrows and spears was feared. Tell-tale signs of danger lurked on every hand. As the party moved ahead in a solid phalanx, a gun was fired. Almost immediately, shouts and calls came from Templu men who were hidden.

[19] Clark, *A Corner of India*, 105.

Pretending surprise and fright, they claimed that they had merely intended to defend themselves. Whatever the case, both parties marched together toward Templu Hill. There, after an advance party went ahead to inform the village officers, the entire leadership of Temple Village came down the hill with as much dignity as they could muster to welcome the delegations from Molung and Merangkong. Then, being escorted up through the great gate into the main street of the village, diplomatic negotiations began. Templu leaders confessed to ambushing and killing the two Molung men. This they insisted was a result of false reports. Further expressions of regret were spoken; and Templu sued for peace. Yet, even as this happened, leaders from the accused 'treacherous' village suddenly appeared in Templu. The Molung and Merangkong delegations quickly departed, hoping to reach Merangkong before dark. There Mary Clark, guarded by fifteen Molung warriors, waited for them.

This frightening experience reminded the Ao Naga Christians that, in the midst of rapid changes, their lives were precariously balanced. Living near big 'war villages' of the Ao Naga tribe became increasingly hazardous. Each journey into a village, where there was a gate adorned by skulls and beset by evidences of ritual blood sacrifices to evil spirits, reminded Naga Christians of dangers around them. Similarly, every time someone was carried off by a tiger, the event would be attributed to the work of demons. Deft diplomacy was required for Ao Naga Christians to survive. Thus, in 1878, Clark was asked to arbitrate between Ao Naga villages, both Christians and non-Christians alike, and colonial authorities. Quite obviously, the Clarks had become respected throughout Ao Naga country. Ao Naga tribal leaders recognized the important contributions made by the missionaries—years of tranquillity and material prosperity. Whenever troubles arose, the Clarks would send messengers to the Deputy Commissioner in Shibsagar, warning of an impending attack on some local village or sending information about hostilities that were about to break out. When they had obtained permission for select Ao Naga Christians to possess firearms and ammunition, for defence against foes human and non-human, the prestige of the Clarks increased even more. Again, in late 1879, signals from hilltops conveyed news that a really big war had finally broken out between the Angami Nagas and the British. Messengers from the British magistrate also came urging the Clarks to flee. The Clarks never hesitated. They decided to remain with their own people. Wars and rumours of wars had become such a regular part of life that they could find no reason to flee. They and the Ao Naga Christians waited and prayed that the war would soon end.

At issue was a shift in policy by the Government of India. After years of vacillating between a 'forward' policy and withdrawal, authorities in

Calcutta finally decided to enter the hills and take control. Angami Nagas, among the most fierce, powerful, and warlike of all Naga tribes, were much feared by other tribes and dreaded on the plains, where they were given to looting, carrying off livestock, taking slaves, and cutting off human heads. To put a stop to chronic depredations, a British 'political' officer came to Samaguting, gateway to the plains, and then moved to Kohima with a company of Indian sepoys. This penetration into the heart of Angami territory where war villages were located was a direct affront—and a threat to Naga freedom. Naga forces gathered at the stronghold of Khonoma. C. B. Damant, the Political Agent, and his entire escort were slain; and Kohima was besieged. The war that followed lasted until March 1880, when Khonoma was destroyed and Angami Nagas were forced to surrender and pay indemnities. All of Angami country was then occupied; and a strong military force was permanently stationed in Kohima. Next, British authority was extended to the Lhota tribe, over villages that lay between the Angami Nagas and the Ao Nagas. Direct rule over Naga villages was not imposed. Rather, a large measure of autonomy and self-governance was allowed on the condition that, henceforth, wars between villages and raids against Assam proper end, on pain of heavy penalty on any violation.

As soon as word of the peace settlement came, Clark had wasted no time in taking advantage of the situation. A young couple, C. D. King and his wife, were sent to Kohima. At its elevation of 1,400 feet, Kohima became headquarters for the new colonial administration. Five years later, in 1885, the imperial government also extended its authority over all Ao Naga peoples. This it did by a ceremonial show of force, with troops marching and counter-marching the length and breadth of Ao Naga territories to the sound of bagpipes and drums, carrying the flag and publicly declaring at every village that there would be no more spilling of blood, no more head-hunting or plundering raids, and no more toleration for inter-tribal wars. Like the Angamis and Lhotas before them, the Ao Nagas could not believe what they heard. To them the British action seemed to be nothing more than another raid, albeit a huge one. They went on as before—ambushing, and pillaging, and taking heads.

Edward and Mary Clark, exhausted and ill after years of constant strain and toil, returned to America not long after these events. But the fifty-one Ao Nagas whom they reported as having been baptized did not begin to reflect the true number of Christian converts whose gatherings for worship were by then occurring in several villages. One year later, when the Clarks returned from America, they discovered that, in Molung alone, twenty-four more had been baptized during their absence. But even the larger figure of seventy-nine did not accurately reflect the actual number of Ao Naga Christians, so much as the cautious estimates of those whose whole way

of life conformed to the strict standards of propriety that these American Baptists insisted upon. Early missionaries, especially American Baptists, were very careful about allowing 'premature' baptisms. So many more were enrolled in schools and involved in worship that were not baptized until they could meet minimum requirements that it sometimes seemed as if baptism did not extend very far beyond those who served as preachers and teachers. Thus, the many others who were not yet baptized but were part of the Christian community of Merangkong soon received a literate and well-trained young Naga couple as their pastor and teacher. In the years that followed, Merangkong itself began to produce a steady stream of talented Christian leaders. By 1904, Merangkong hosted the first Annual Meeting of the Ao Naga Association of Baptist Churches.

Among their accomplishments during their years among the Ao Nagas, Edward and Mary Clark produced an Ao Naga–English Dictionary, a Grammar, a Catechism, translations of the Gospels of Matthew and John, the story of Joseph taken from Genesis, an Ao Naga Gospel Hymnbook, other portions of the New Testament, and several school textbooks. A simple 'hand press' sent out to them from Philadelphia enabled them to print all of these works themselves, with each page being printed as soon as it was ready and serving as a loose-leaf 'lesson for the day'. Later, Mary Clark was to publish a full grammar of the Ao Naga language, a work that is still in print.[20] As early as 1898, a special school for the training of Ao Naga pastors and teachers was established at Impur. This new settlement was located on a huge, flat-topped elevation further up into interior hills (later to gain fame as a staging area for troops during the Second World War).

From the 1880s and 1890s onwards, an acceleration in the growth of Naga Baptist Christian congregations and Christian village settlements occurred. What had begun with the Ao Nagas gradually spread to the Angami Nagas, Lotha Nagas, and Sema Nagas; and ultimately to more and more of the roughly fifty tribes that described themselves as being Nagas, spreading across and down into the princely state of Manipur. Across the ravines of northern Burma, Kachins, Chins, and Karens were also being reached with the Gospel by Baptist missionaries who were entering into the area from Burma. Each expansion was followed by a further establishing and strength-ening of educational institutions, medical centres, vocational schools, and other kinds of supporting infrastructures. To better understand the acceler-ating rate of conversions among Naga tribes, with numbers of converts and

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[20] Mrs E. W. (M. M.) Clark, *The Ao-Naga Grammar: With Illustrations, Phrases, and Vocabulary* (Delhi: Gian Publications, 1981, originally published Shillong: Assam, Secretariat Print. Office, 1893).

congregations doubling and tripling in every decade within ever widening circles of Naga peoples, a number of qualitative and quantitative distinctions need to be made. Conversions among the extremely aggressive and warlike Angami Nagas, for example, came much more slowly than among the Ao Nagas or the Sema Nagas. As a consequence, Ao Nagas hosted almost three times as many missionaries as settled among the Angamis—seventeen vs. seven. Initially, therefore, far more Ao Naga leaders were trained, both pastors and teachers or persons who entered other services. This fact reflected the much higher numbers of Christians, men, women, and children, who became literate both in their 'mother tongue' and in English. Ao Naga Impur to the north and Angami Kohima to the south became and remained the two most important centres for training young Naga evangelists, preachers, and teachers, both male and female.

Spontaneously, Sema Naga villages lying between Ao Naga and Angami Naga villages turned Christian without prior direct missionary contacts. J. H. Hutton who studied them between 1915 and 1920 found only one small Christian settlement and a few scattered Christian households. Just a few years later, a missionary travelling from Impur to Kohima discovered a large number of Sema Naga Christian congregations regularly worshipping in their own meeting houses, without any apparent pastors. The swiftness with which this mass movement swept through the Sema Naga villages was such that, a decade later, an astonished Joseph Tanquist, the senior missionary at Kohima, wrote of 'marvels of spiritual transformation the likes of which I have never seen before'.[21] This movement reflected a remarkable symbiosis of conceptual and cultural categories, so that the existing Sema Naga vocabulary was easily translated into 'Christian' meanings, reflecting a metamorphosis common to all such events. At the same time, this transformation reflected new socio-political realities on the ground. The abolition of incessant warfare, of tribe against tribe and village against village as a ritualized institution of aggrandizement among Sema Naga village lords, coincided with a rejection of dependency among lower-level warriors and weaker villages. The turning of Sema Nagas to Christianity became a means by which domestic security could be ensured and local authority enhanced. Thus, instead of head hunting and war, competitive efforts were made to determine who could acquire the most Christian institutions. In turn, newly trained preachers and teachers coming from Kohima or Impur helped to bring new kinds of prosperity, security, and social status. Finally, partly as a result of direct involvement and sufferings during the Japanese invasion of the second World War, Sema Nagas turned to the Christian faith more

[21] Tanquist Papers MSS (1936), 240–1 (Bethel Theological Seminary Archives, St Paul, Minn.).

rapidly, more massively, and more thoroughly than any other Naga people, so that, within a short time, they themselves spearheaded missionary movements among remaining unreached Naga tribes.

Attitudes of imperial rulers (district officers and political agents) who established new governing institutions in the wake of the Angami War of 1878 became increasingly ambivalent. Initially pleased to find a ready supply of reliable young Naga Christians to fill clerical and administrative positions and to see increasing employment bringing prosperity to ever widening circles of Naga villages, some officials gradually turned against missionary activities. They began to blame missionaries for disrupting and even destroying the 'pristine purity' of ancient cultures and the hallowed traditions of aboriginal peoples. Thus, with occasional exceptions, relations between missionaries and imperial officials became increasingly ambiguous and uneasy.[22] Naga peoples themselves resented both the Assamese intruders and increasing numbers of 'Indian' officials being introduced into their region. Antipathies to the employment of outsiders, whether officials or merchants, who settled in Kohima and other burgeoning towns, increased. They remembered Ahom rulers, their ancient enemies who for ages had tried to conquer and dominate Naga peoples. Assamese or other kinds of Indian bankers, merchants, and money-lenders were seen as tricksters who defrauded Nagas and drove them into debt bondage.

From the 1920s onward, despite employing educated Nagas, almost all of whom were Christians, for positions within the civil or police services, official state antipathy toward Christianization increased. While no formal steps to expel missionaries were taken, magistrates and judges frowned upon events that divided village communities between Christians and non-Christians. Some, as dedicated ethnologists, sought to preserve traditional cultures and time-honoured institutions. Baptist prohibitions against drinking rice beer, against 'heathen' or 'lewd' songs and dances, against reckless consumption at Feasts of Merit, and against working on the Sabbath were viewed as disruptive and destructive. On the other side, the wearing of Western clothing and modern technologies disturbed romantic ethnologists and tourists. Catholic missionaries from South India who arrived in 1950 took a more relaxed approach to drinking, dancing, and tribal traditions. By the late twentieth century, some anthropologists, ethnologists, or sociologists with different agendas began to explain away the validity of Christian conversions—often in pseudo-scientific or socio-scientific terms. Such thinkers rarely took religion itself seriously, preferring to see supernatural religion as epi–phenomenal or as false consciousness, that could be accounted for in purely rational and 'scientific' terms.

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[22] Among these were Verrier Elwin, J. Mills, and J. H. Hutton.

Two countervailing processes can be observed that, in the long run, were to lead to much misery, suffering, and war. One was a hybridizing form of integration or 'nationalization' that led to a pan-Naga consciousness. Another was an alienation of Nagas from Indian nationalism and a rejection of pan-Indianism in all its forms. Both processes were complex—one impulse leading to integration with India and the wider world and another impulse remaining separatist. Both for Nagas and for India, these impulses led to tragedy and armed hostilities.

The socio-political emergence of a strong 'Naga' national consciousness gathered momentum as a direct consequence of the First World War. Nagas returned from military service in France, where 2,000 or more had served, to form a 'Naga Club' in 1919. Composed of local officials and village lords, all of whom had gone to Baptist missionary schools, especially around Kohima and Mokokchung, the club met regularly for discussions and also ran a cooperative store. In 1929, when the Simon Commission came to Kohima to obtain local opinions about the future of India, the Club formally submitted a memorandum. Signed by leaders from twenty tribes, its words were ominously prescient:

'We pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachments from other people who are now more advanced than us, by withdrawing our country from the reformed [*sic*] and placing us directly under its own protection. If the British Government, however, wants to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people [i.e. of India] who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we have never been subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient time.'[23]

Yet, the main driving force behind the social mobilization of all Naga peoples and what eventually brought them together and made them into a single society was the building up of individual tribal Baptist (church) associations. The first of these, naturally, was the Ao Baptist Association. Founded in 1897, this association met annually to build solidarity, deal with common problems, increase the number of schools, and find inspiration in attractive musical and preaching programmes. Almost inevitably, and invariably, these associations served political purposes, both for dealing with internal disputes between Ao Baptist individuals or between Ao Baptist congregations and for dealing with Ao Baptist disputes without pressures from non-Christian Ao leaders and villages. Thus, for example, when non-Christian rulers of several villages tried to compel Christian minorities within villages to pay for feasts (e.g. Feasts of Merit) and festivals or

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[23] M. Alemchiba Ao, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima: Naga Institute of Culture, 1970), 164. As quoted in Jacobs et al., *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India*, 151–2.

'forbidden actions on days of prohibition' called *gennas* by levying heavy fines against the Christians, their demand was overruled on appeal to government officials on the grounds that 'the religious scruples of the Christians must be properly respected'.[24]

Until 1920, growth within the Ao Baptist Association was slow. Thereafter its upward trajectory was spectacular at least until 1971, when the centennial of the Ao Naga Baptists was celebrated. In subsequent reports of the association, Ao Naga Baptists emphasized the strength of their missionary work among the Sema Nagas, thereby indicating that while foreign (American Baptist) missionaries did little among the Sema Nagas, Ao Nagas were playing a more predominant role than was shown in missionary reports to America. At the time of their centennial, according to Frederick S. Downs, Ao Nagas were reaching out to 70 per cent of the entire Nagaland population.[25]

In due course, as predictably as clockwork, another thirteen tribal church associations came into being. The second of these was the Angami Baptist Association, founded in 1912. Growth remained extremely slow, from the founding of the first Angami Baptist Church in Kohima until the 1920s and 1930s. Growth became more rapid after 1939 and accelerated into a 'people's movement' in the period between 1951 and 1971. The third association to be formed was the *Sema Baptist Kughakulu* (Sema Baptist Convention), which they claimed to have started in 1922, with its centre at Mokochung. Under the relentless efforts of Inaho and Kiyevi, and other local evangelists, converts and congregations multiplied until, in 1938, there were seventy-eight churches, twenty-four schools, and over 8,000 baptized believers. When funds for building a training school could not be raised, 7,753 days of volunteer labour enabled the completion of ten buildings within a 25-acre campus compound at Aizuto. The fourth assembly of local deacons, elders, pastors, and teachers was the Lotha Baptist Association, founded in 1926, with its centre in Wokha. Others that can only be named are: Kuki (1926), Rengma (1940), Chakhesang (1949), Zeliangrong (1953), United Sangtam, Chang, Konyak, Phom, Yimchunger, and Kheamungan Baptist Associations.[26] What these integrating events show, beyond all doubt, is a spirit of adventure, exploration, and expansion that was driven by Naga missions to

[24] *Ao Baptist Association Annual Report for 1906*, 156, as found in Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 71.

[25] Frederick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period, 1836–1950* (Gauhati: CLS, 1971), 113. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 75.

[26] These are listed and described by Puthuvail Thomas Philip, who went to each centre, examined records, and consulted with local leaders. *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, pp. vi–viii, 67–125, 126–63.

yet unreached Nagas. Tribes themselves contributed to the social mobiliza-
tion that, in turn, gave impetus to Naga 'national' consciousness. That
separate tribal councils formed for the purpose of local self-government is
hardly surprising. The Lhota Council (1923) and the Ao Council (1928) led
to the Naga Baptist Association which, in many respects, paralleled it, with
many of the same leaders serving in each. The valour of Naga contributions
to the Allied cause during the war led to the formation of an overall Naga
District Council which, in 1946, was turned into the Naga National Council.
This soon made demands for total independence.

All in all, Naga peoples experienced 'the most massive movement to
Christianity in all of Asia, second only to the Philippines'.[27] Well over 95
per cent of all Nagas are now Christians. While most are Baptist, since 1950,
when Catholic missionaries first entered Naga territories, a growing number
have become Catholic. Significantly, more Nagas turned Christian *after* the
ending of imperial rule and the expulsion of foreign missionaries by the
national Government of India.[28] Nagas have resented charges that their faith
was an alien implant upon hapless peoples. While both colonial rule and
missionary efforts played significant roles, neither were the primary agents
for the conversion of Nagas to Christianity. Most conversions took place in
districts well beyond spheres of missionary presence or colonial control.
Languages local people could understand as their mother tongue were the
vehicles of conversion. As one Naga leader explained: 'Europeans do not
have a monopoly on Christianity . . . Christianity came to Europe from Asia
and some Indians were Christians 500 years before the Europeans. When
Europeans became Christians, they made it a European indigenous religion.
They changed their names and founded festivals in relation to their cultures.
Now I, like many Nagas, am a Christian, but I am not a European. I have a
relationship with my God. Now my God can speak to me in dreams, just as
happened to my Angami ancestors. I don't have to be like Anglicans or
Catholics and go through all those rituals. I don't need them. What I am
talking about is Naga Christianity—an indigenous Naga Christianity.'[29]
    Indigenous strength and a fiercely independent spirit has, since earliest
times, fuelled Naga aspirations. This did not diminish when the Indian
Empire moved into Assam after the first Burma War in 1826 nor after the
emergence of Indian Independence after the Second World War. Indian
nationalism, in both its secularist and its sectarian modes, aroused resistance

[27] Eaton, 'Comparative History as World History', 47.
[28] Ibid. 48.
[29] International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), *The Naga Nation and its Struggle
against Genocide* (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 1986), 106–7.

and brought troubles that have continued, despite the formation of a separate state of Nagaland in 1963. These were peoples who, for ages untold, had never been Sanskritized or Islamicized and who were only too eager to escape from conditions of brutality and insecurity. This having been so, Christianity has simply become an accepted and vital part of a Naga ethnic identity, as this was 'constructed' (or 'invented') during the past century. As such, it has separated them from peoples from whom they fervently want to be separated—namely, Hindus and Muslims. It is this sense of common heritage that also drives them to discover the antiquity of their own culture. Underlying all these events, therefore, lies a sense of a common Christian identity. And this, for the most part, has been and still is Baptist.

The role of Naga Baptists within larger political processes, as already suggested, has followed at least two parallel trajectories—one aiming at complete separation from India and another attempting to integrate Nagas into the body politic of India. Initially, the weight of Naga sentiments favoured total independence. This attitude was strengthened in reaction against Assamese attempts to incorporate the whole of the Naga peoples and territories into the state of Assam. Provision of autonomous self-govern-ment previously accorded to Naga peoples by the (imperial) Government of India in exchange for ending predatory raids into the Assam Valley was rescinded by the new National Government. Abandonment of the policy that had successfully brought about the pacification of the Naga Tribes had serious consequences. When Nagas loudly protested, Nehru himself went up to Kohima to 'lecture' Nagas on their 'patriotic' duties as India's citizens. When his address to a huge gathering of Nagas at the Kohima railway station took on a condescending and scolding tone, the entire crowd turned their backs and silently walked away from him.[30] Being an extremely proud person, Nehru never forgot this affront. Nagas, in turn, refused to accept direct Indian rule. Being well armed, with masses of modern weapons accumulated while fighting the Japanese, they launched a full-scale 'war of independence' (or 'insurgency'). Since 1963, when statehood was granted to a self-governing but not independent or sovereign Nagaland, Nagas have remained divided in their loyalties. Some pragmatically accept local autonomy as 'the next best thing'. Others remain fiercely devoted to a totally independent nation. The Naga government in exile, proclaimed in 1956 as the Naga Federal Government (NFG), has continued the often bloody struggle as an armed opposition movement.

The literature on the last half-century is vast, with polemics and studies arrayed on both sides. Baptists, of one sort or another, seem to have fallen on

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[30] This anecdote has remained in the writer's memory ever since the late 1940s when, as a student at Bethel College (St Paul, Minn.), it was told by Bengt Anderson, and corroborated by J. E. Tanquist.

both sides of the divide. Phizo, one of the early Naga nationalist leaders, came out of Kohima and was one of Tanquist's students. Tanquist told this writer that he was not a good student since he was too engaged in politics.[31] So-called 'Maoist Naga Baptists' engaged in hostilities against India. (Similar circumstances drove Karen Baptists into a state of rebellion and perpetual insurgency against the state of Burma.) Other Naga Baptists became part of modern India, taking part in the Legislative Assembly, the government of Nagaland, and in various branches of the administrative services. Interestingly, one can see a close correlation between Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Nagaland and ongoing leadership within the Baptist Church of Nagaland.

Adivāsi *Movements of Meghalaya and Mizoland*

Conversions among *adivāsi* peoples in mountains on the eastern frontier, beginning in the 1850s, can be seen as multiplying decade by decade thereafter—until at least the end of the twentieth century. By that time an overwhelming majority of all such peoples were already in the process of becoming Christians, so that movements can be seen to have accelerated after the ejection of missionaries from India in the 1950s. But, again as in other instances, only after initial periods of incubation that for Khasis began in the 1850s, for Garos in the 1860s, for Nagas in the 1870s, for Meitei and Nagas of Manipur in the 1890s, and for Mizos in the late 1890s and early 1900s, did movements of conversion to Christianity gain momentum. While significant movements also occurred within the older princely states of Manipur and Tripura, where significant movements of unrest against the Government of India also continue to struggle for greater local autonomy, this study will be confined, in addition to the Nagas, to the Khasis, Garos, and Mizos. These too were peoples who had never before been conquered and who were still ruling themselves when they collided with the Raj.

Khasi and Garo Christians of Meghalaya

High in the Khasi Hills lies Cherrapunji, the wettest place on earth (that records some forty-two feet of rain per year, up to half of it in one month). The first Christian missionary sent to work among Khasis in 1813 was Krishna Chandra Pal—the first convert of the Serampore Mission a decade earlier. Little is known about what happened to the persons, including two

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[31] One Phizo nephew, I was also informed long years ago, became a Professor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania; and a diaspora of other Naga researchers, scholars, and technicians are scattered across the world.

Khasis, whom he baptized. Mission work was interrupted, between 1829 and 1833, by major armed conflicts of the Indo-Khasi War. This delayed Christian attempts to enter into the Khasi Hills by twelve years. In 1841, two Welsh Calvinist Methodist missionaries (later known as Welsh Presbyterians) arrived.[32] Thomas Jones and his wife found that their progress was very slow. By 1846, they reported that only two Khasi converts had been baptized. During the next twelve years, as the number of Christians increased to twelve, the Gospel message was spread to the Jaintia Hills and to Shillong. By 1866, the number of baptized believers had risen to 307. These were unevenly distributed among ten congregations. The fact that standards for admission to membership within a Christian congregation were very strict, especially in such matters as drink and marital fidelity, may partially account for these figures. Another factor accounting for slow growth was a requirement that only those who became literate were allowed to become baptized.

Years of gradual 'incubation' led to more rapid expansion under indigenous leadership during the next century.[33] Thus, while in 1891 there were only four ordained Khasi pastors for 2,147 church members, by then the Bible had been translated, congregations had organized themselves into five presbyteries, and medical clinics and hospitals were being opened. In 1902, conversions spread into the Lushai Hills, where congregational rolls soon recorded 5,616 members, 16,659 regular worshippers, and 16,161 school attenders.[34] Momentum dramatically increased in 1905–6, when the great 'Khasia Revival' broke out, bringing about some 8,000 immediate conversions, with 'Pentecostal' reverberations quickly spreading around the world. During the inter-war years, between 1919 and 1939, indigenous church leaders took increasing control and responsibility for their own ecclesiastical structures.[35] Another movement that eventually increased the number of Khasi converts was the arrival, in 1890, after several previous Catholic failures, of Salvatorian missionaries. Within a year, two Khasi women, Anna Longum and her daughter, had turned Catholic. Salvatorians were Germans. As such, they were rigorously demanding and did not employ

[32] Nalini Natarajan, *The Missionary among the Khasis* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1977), 62–73. John Hughes Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, to the End of the Year 1904* (Carnarvon: Calvinistic Methodist Book Room, 1910).

[33] J. Fortis Jyrwa, *The Wondrous Works of God: A Study on the Growth and Development of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church in the 20th Century*, foreword by Frederick S. Downs (Shillong: M. B. Jyrwa, 1980).

[34] *MUNDUS: Gateway to Missionary Collections in the United Kingdom:* Website: file://d:/HISTORY%20OF%20CHRISTIANITY%20IN%20INDIA%20-%20Research/Mizo%20Christians%20and%20Mizoram/Wales%20Presbyterian%20Mission/Foreign%20Mission%20of%20the%20Presbyterian%20Church%20of%20Wales.htm; National Archives of Wales: GB 0210 MSS 27,066–27,472.

[35] Nigel Jenkins, *Gwalia in Khasia* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1995).

Khasi catechists until they were well trained. Many of their earliest converts were 'fallen' Khasi Presbyterians—Christians who had been thrown out of their congregations for drinking alcohol, or for other forbidden practices. As a consequence, a pamphlet war broke out between the two Christian communities, each accusing the other of 'sheep stealing'. Whereas Presbyterians were opponents of drinking and smoking, as well as betel–nut (*pān*) chewing, dancing, and theatre, Catholics took a more relaxed attitude toward such pleasures and, thereby, were able to attract many Khasis, Christian and non-Christian alike, who did not wish to be so puritanical.[36] Also, Catholics did not require literacy for membership. On yet another level, Catholics excelled in the superb quality of their schools, to which European and Indian elites often chose to send their boys and girls. By the outbreak of the First World War, when the Salvatorians were interned, there were over 5,000 Khasi Catholics. Salvatorians were replaced by Jesuits from Bengal and by the Salesian Society of Dom Bosco. By 1933, there were over 24,000 Khasi Catholics, whose children were enrolled in 280 primary schools. By the end of the Second World War, Catholic Khasis, having multiplied three times, were increasing more rapidly than any other group.[37] Their Bishop, George Kottuppallil, attributed much of this growth to the traditional Khasi love for colourful rituals, mysteries, and for the Virgin Mary. 'Khasis have to make a bigger leap to become Presbyterians than they do from their tribal faith to us.'[38]

That Garo Christians also started out as Baptists is hardly surprising.[39] The first Chief Commissioner of Assam, David Scott, had been a student of William Carey at Fort William College. He sent three Garo boys in 1819 to study at the newly established Serampore College and invited missionaries to work among the Garos. Being then preoccupied with other concerns and without British Baptist missionaries to send, Carey turned to the American Baptists and invited them to work in Assam. Captain Frances Jenkins, the Chief Commissioner of Assam who took charge after Scott was killed, failed to get the American Baptist Mission to open a school for Garos at Gaolpar in 1837. He then established a government school at Guwahati in 1847. Before this short–lived school closed, two Garo youths, Omed and Ramkhe, became its beneficiaries.

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[36] Charlie Pye-Smith, *Rebels and Outcasts: A Journey through Christian India* (London: Viking, 1997), 276.

[37] Sebastian Karotemprel, *The Catholic Church in North-East India, 1890–1990* (Shillong: Archbishop's House, 1993); and *The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North-East India* (Shillong: Archbishop's House, 1994).

[38] Quoted from the Bishop's interview with Pye-Smith, *Rebels and Outcasts*, 279.

[39] Ruth Grimes Ewing, *Our Life with the Garos of Assam, India* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, [1971]).

Omed joined the police. But Ramkhe aspired to become a teacher so that he could bring literacy to his own people. In 1857, Omed happened upon a Gospel tract in an abandoned mission bungalow. This so aroused his interest that he continued to pursue more Christian knowledge. Two years later, a Bengali Christian contractor, Samuel Loveday, introduced him to Kandura Babu, the pastor of the Bengali Christian congregation in Guwahati. The frequent conversations that followed brought him to Christian faith. Meanwhile, Ramkhe, who was also a spiritually restless individual, became increasingly dissatisfied with Garo religious traditions. Convinced that, some-where, there had to be one great and good God who cared for people, he spent long hours in the jungle praying that he might behold this God. On one of his prayer sessions in the jungle, he was interrupted by a tall and impressive person. This person told him that his prayers had been heard. *Sadhus* whom he told about this experience explained to him that what he had glimpsed was Ram himself and that he had been led to meet one of the great avatars of Vishnu. Years later, after his Christian conversion, he became convinced that what he had experienced had been comparable to what happened to Paul on the Damascus Road. He also read a Christian tract and, after his training as a teacher was completed, held long conversations with Omed and Kandura Babu. Soon afterwards, both men asked for baptism. This took place in 1863 when Miles Bronson, the American Baptist missionary, happened to visit Guwahati. Both men then urged that missionaries be sent to their own people, the Garos. When this did not happen, they decided that they themselves would go to their own people with the Gospel.

After several failed attempts, Ramkhe went to Damra to start a school. Omed set up a camp at a jungle crossing called Rajasimla. There he invited passing travellers to come and rest in his small hut. When they did this, he shared the Christian message, gave his own personal testimony, and prayed for them. In 1866, he reported to Bronson that seventy Garos were regularly meeting with him for worship and that many of them wanted baptism. Bronson visited him in 1867. He was overwhelmed to find that twenty-six new believers were asking him for baptism. This was by far the largest single group of recent converts that he had seen during all his thirty years of missionary work. After carefully examining each new believer, he baptized them all and organized a new church on the spot, something he had not done in twenty-two years. He immediately also ordained Omed as pastor of this fledgling congregation. When ten more persons then came for baptism the next day, he made sure that Omed himself performed the baptism, so that all might know that, from that point onwards, Omed possessed the authority to perform all the responsibilities of a pastor. Ramkhe also soon became an ordained pastor/teacher. Together, these two Garo Christian leaders, with their families, became the spear points of what very soon

looked like a mass movement.[40] The number of Christians doubled and then trebled within a very short time. American Baptist missionaries, who had stumbled several times and considered closing all their work in Assam, responded more enthusiastically when Bronson wrote to say that, at long last, the equivalent of 'Karens of Assam' had been found—an allusion to the remarkable mass movement already in progress among peoples in the mountains of Burma. Two young missionary couples were immediately sent out from America. Their task was to begin to establish schools, start serious translation work, set up printing presses, and develop the entire supporting infrastructure that the movement needed. By 1875, an association of Garo churches was organized; and, with accelerating speed, more and more Garos came into the Christian fold.[41]

'Garo' is spoken by about 700,000 people. About 100,000 Garos also live across the border in Bangladesh, just south of the Garo Hills, with small settlements in the Jaintia and Khasi Hills, in Tripura state, and Assam. A written form of Garo language, developed by American Baptist missionaries during the last decades of the nineteenth century, is based upon one dialect in the north-eastern corner of the Garo Hills. It was in this area that substantial numbers of Garo Christians first became educated and literate. Their dialect, in written form, has influenced the language of educated Garos everywhere. The same missionaries who produced the first grammars and dictionaries also introduced Romanized scripts. As the language that they developed became the medium of elementary education in all of the Garo Hills, collections of Garo stories were published, and weekly newspapers began to circulate ever more widely. Understandably, apart from school books, most publications remained predominantly religious in character; and since most Garos are now considered to be Christians, such works include the Garo Bible, Garo hymnbooks, and texts in Garo theology.

By the time the last Welsh missionaries departed in 1967, American Baptist missionaries having already also been denied admission into the Garo Hills, Christianity among Garos and Khasis had become substantially embedded, so that each Christian culture was intermingled with the culture out of which it had emerged. Five years later, after the state of Meghalaya came into existence, ever increasing proportions of the state's entire population became Christian. Numbers of Christians having increased by 121 per cent

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[40] Frederick S. Downs, 'Origins of Christianity in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya', *Indian Church History Review*, 6: 1 (June 1972), 82–3 (79–86); and *History of Christianity in India*, v. 5: *North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Bangalore: CHAI, 1993), 78–80.

[41] Downs, 'Origins of Christianity', 83–6. Also see Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*.

during the decade between 1991 and 2001, the total proportion of Christians within the entire population of 2.3 million now stands at over 80 per cent. In addition to Khasi Catholics, Khasi Presbyterians, and Garo Baptists, there has been a rapid proliferation of many other kinds of Christian communities, both denominational and non-denominational, so that there is a hardly a Christian movement in the world that has not found a home in Meghalaya. Due to competition, some growth has come from 'poaching' or 'reconversion' from one Christian community to another. This being the case, one can not only find Church of Christ, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, and Pentecostal Christians, but also Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons among Garos and Khasis, not to mention a host of international 'faith', 'interfaith', or totally indigenous movements.

Mizo Christian Movements and Mizoram[42]

Mizoram became a full-fledged state within the Indian Union on 7 August 1986. This event occurred ten years after a peace agreement virtually ended the insurgency of the Mizo National Front (MNF). One of the 'seven sisters' of north-east India, Mizoram is the third almost totally 'Christian' state of India. Originally known as the Lushai, Mizos consist of half a dozen cognate tribes. They were once ferocious head hunters who migrated westwards over two centuries ago, into the 'Lushai Hills' that were named after them. The process of Christianization began over a century ago. Lushais had suffered a series of defeats and their predatory raids onto Indian territory came to an end in 1890–2. One consequence of their turning Christian, as in the case of other *adivāsi* peoples, was the growth of an integrating process that eventually prompted new Christian peoples to refer to themselves simply as 'Mizos' or 'Forest People'. From the first two conversions in 1899, followed by twenty-three in January of the next year, conversion movements rapidly gained momentum. The 'Great Revival' that occurred among Khasis and Jaintias in 1905 spilled over into the Lushai Hill and profoundly accelerated the rate of Mizo conversions. By 1921 there were as many as 27,270 Mizo Christians and multiplying thousands of persons turned Christian each year.[43] From the outset of this movement in 1903, when British Baptist (BMS) missionaries R. W. Savidge

[42] Chhangte Lal Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn, Lunglei Dist., Mizoram: Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987), despite its missiological bias, is the most thorough work on this subject available in English; John Vanlal Hluna, *Church & Political Upheaval in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on the Political Development in Mizoram* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Mizo Historical Association, 1985).
[43] O. L. Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in North-East India* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1993); Jenkins, *Gwalia in Khasia*.

and J. H. Lorain settled in Aizawal, Lushai Hills, literacy and education were seen as primary vehicles of evangelization. Indeed, so closely was conversion associated with education in the minds of local non-Christians that they considered anyone going to school to have already become a Christian. Missionary wives and single women simultaneously took care to make sure that education for women received due attention. Female missionaries, nurses, teachers, and doctors occasionally outnumbered male missionaries. When trained, Mizo nurses and teachers then began to marry Mizo chieftains. By 1931, membership of congregations had grown to 66,000; and annual growth rates continued to exceed 300 per cent during the decades that followed. By now, with over 90 per cent of the Mizo population of nearly a million declare themselves to be Christians. The process of Christianization is nearly complete.[44] In more recent times, a diaspora of Mizo Christian leaders and scholars has spread, both as missionaries and as individuals trained in other professions, not only across India but also to settlements overseas.

Conclusion

No study of *adivāsi* Christians can be complete or entirely satisfactory that does not, at the very least, recognize that substantial movements of conversion took place among *adivāsi* peoples who have for many centuries, if not millennia, inhabited forests and mountain escarpments, not only on the external frontiers, but also along frontiers within the continent itself. While the surface of this subject has hardly been scratched here, Christian communities among at least two or three such interior areas, serving as prime examples, can be mentioned. Indeed, the state of Jharkhand, if not the state of Chhattisgarh, can be seen as having come into existence at least partially due to agitations and self-assertions of peoples who received literacy and modern education from within Christian missionary institutions. Among various aboriginal tribes that were open to conversion, the Gonds/Khonds, Mundas, Oraons, and Santals can be seen as having been especially responsive. Parallel processes occurred within what were then known as the Chota Nagpur districts of Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa, as also in the Santal Parganas. German Lutheran missionaries who had arrived in 1845 were successful in setting up educational and other infrastructures necessary

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[44] Hluna, *Church & Political Upheaval in Mizoram*, 14, census for 1971 shows that Christians came to be 86.09% of Mizo population. F. Hrangkhuma, 'Christianity among the Mizo in Mizoram', in F. Hrangkhuma (ed.) *Christianity in India: Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 265–311; 'Christian Growth Alarmingly High in NE', *North East Enquirer*, 3 (22 Feb.–6 Mar. 2005): http://127.0.0.1:4664/search&s=bQSalVlj-J8vgj9Kk1OKlfBvnMk?q=Christian+growth+alarmingly+high&btnG.

for sustaining peoples for whom they provided literacy through networks of schools. But, when large numbers of tribals became Christians, violent reactions came from landlords (*zamindars*) and merchant money-lenders (*sahukars*) who had exploited such peoples. When their Lutheran mentors failed to champion their cause, for the sake of social justice, Catholic missionaries, who had also entered Chota Nagpur in 1868, eventually came to their rescue and became their champions. Twenty years later, in 1888, when they put themselves squarely behind the already severely distressed and persecuted Munda and Oraon Christians, many of these turned Catholic. The dynamic Catholic missionary leader was Constanz Lievens, director of the Jesuit Mission in Chota Nagpur. Under his leadership, Catholic catechists and schoolteachers, working within 'circles' of local communicants, were able to support oppressed tribal Christians, so much so that appeals of the Catholic Christian community soon rivalled, and even surpassed, evangelistic appeals being made by the Lutheran missionaries, pastors, and teachers.[45]

British Baptists belonging to the Serampore Mission entered the Santal Parganas in 1824. But not until after Santal rebellions ended in 1855–6 did conversions begin to accelerate. Memories of the Santal defeat were still quite acute when, in 1867, Lars Olsen Skrefsrud and Hans Peter Börrensen settled among them—first under the BMS and, later, under the Nordiske Santal Mission.[46] Coming from a poor family, Skrefsrud had turned to Christ while in prison for theft. He had then committed his life to missionary service. Striving to rescue Santals from debt slavery, greedy money-lenders, and landlords, he realized that without Santal leadership there could never be a genuine Santal Christianity or Santal Church.[47] While opposed to idolatry, he extolled the essentials of Santal culture, and inserted Christian themes into Santal lyrics and Santal tunes, saying: 'We must distinguish between Christianity and European forms of civilization; the first we will give them in their own vessels, and the second we will leave in Europe.'[48] These Scandinavian missionaries quickly realized that 'Santals, though unable to plan for tomorrow, should be converted by Santals.'[49] Deeply respectful of Santal culture, encouraging Santal Christians to retain many

[45] Fidelis de Sa, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur* (Bangalore: A Redemption Publication, 1975), 73–111, 116–49.

[46] Olav Hodne, *The Seed Bore Fruit: A Short History of the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches 1867–1967* (Dumka: Published by the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches, 1967).

[47] Olav Hodne, *L. O. Skrefsrud, Missionary and Social Reformer among the Santals of Santal Parganas: With Special Reference to the Period between 1867 and 1881* (Oslo: Egede Instituttet, 1966).

[48] Nils E. Bloch-Noell, 'Skrefsrud, Lars Olsen (1840–1910)', in Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmillan, 1998).

[49] Marine Carrin and Harald Tambs-Lyche, in Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India*, 274–94.

tribal customs and attire, the formation of a Santal National Church that would be completely free from mission dependency was part of the original plan. But, for all these grand early developments, a long period of uneven progress followed. Only after 1950 did the Santal Church become independent of missionaries; and only after 1958 did a Santal leadership begin to preside. Only since then have Santal Christians come into their own. Parallels to their story are to be found in the histories of dozens of separate Christian communities whose roots were *adivāsi*.

Yet, as in previous chapters, the question of why some *adivāsi* people turned Christian and why others did not comes to the fore. And, again, as in previous chapters, hints as to how and why such differences of response occurred lie in differences of circumstances, with special reference to that substratum of primal religions that underlay the religions of all peoples in India, whatever the measure of structures superimposed upon 'traditional religions' or of more 'established' or 'sophisticated' systems of religion. As suggested in the Introduction, where 'Hindu' (Brahmanical, or *Sanskritî*) and/or Islamic cultures had not established a strong presence and where aboriginal tribes fiercely defended their own autonomy and independence, the strength of primal religions often 'discovered' an affinity in Christian faith and then 'appropriated' this faith in such a way that, by and large, substantial elements of primal traditions remained intact and some sort of synthesis became possible. This subject has loomed especially large not only within the narrative examined in this chapter, but also within Chapter 7. *Adivāsi* peoples, in many ways, were even more open to the Christian faith than peoples within *āvarna* castes, some of which had found acceptable places for themselves within ritual observances and temples of 'Hindu' India or, in some cases, had opted for a place within Islamic or Buddhist institutions. (For a more complete discussion of the role of primal religion, as a category, and approaches to particular primal religions, readers are referred back to the Introduction.)

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CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

Christian faith, at various times and in various circumstances, has been able to transcend 'ethnic, national, and cultural barriers'. It has never been bound, confined, or defined exclusively in terms of one culture. It has no single sacred language-in-text, such as Arabic within Islam; nor any sacred 'language-in-genome' of blood or earth, as in Aryan and Brahmanical or *Sanskriti* lore as embodied in ideologies of 'Hindutva'. No one culture is sacred. Yet, all cultures have had the potential of becoming sacred, depending on how much their essentials can be transformed so as to reflect everlasting verities that are truly sacred. What happened among various Christian communities of India, whether they were by birth 'pure' (*savarna*), 'colourless' (*āvarna*, or *Dalit*), or aboriginal (*adivāsi*), as described within chapters of this study, can be seen as manifold instances of indigenous discoveries and appropriations of Christianity and not merely as instances of Christian discovery and exploration of native cultures by missionaries or scholars who were alien to India.[1] This theme, mentioned in the Conclusion of Chapter 11, has been repeated, over and over again and in one way or another, within all the other chapters of this book. It is a theme repeated over and over in this work, reflecting the classic Tamil aphorism enunciated by Nellaiyan Vedanayakam Sastriar, that 'one catches an elephant with an elephant, and a quail with a quail'.[2]

Critical and Comprehensive Concerns

It is for this reason that anyone who approaches the history of Christianity in India, be they Indian or not, must perforce exercise judicious deference and humility. Reasons for doing so are manifold. For anyone who comes from outside India, it takes temerity to attempt such a work as this. But the same can also be said for anyone who is Indian or South Asian, for the simple

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[1] Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–22, 73–4, etc.

[2] 'Twelve Arguments of the Divine Songsters' [*Jñānappāttaja Panninujñāyam*], in D. Dennis Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India: Tamil Evangelical Christians, 1706–1835* (London: Routledge-Curzons, 2000), 155.

reason that there is no such thing as any single person or community that is truly representative of 'India'—that is, someone whose cultural and linguistic grasp of the whole continent is so universal that it is possible for such a person to climb within the cultural ethos and understandings of the thousands of separate communities that make up the extreme pluralism that is India. In other words, even though this work attempts to be Indocentric and to concentrate upon Christians *of* India—i.e. South Asia—and even though the writer, from his birth in the Nilagiris, upbringing in Telengana, and half a century of professional scholarship in this field, has focused upon indigenous and local influences upon historical events in India, he cannot, and does not, claim any particularly advantaged position of authority. The point to be made is this: there are many in India whose authority to write about some particular facet of Christianity in India is much greater than that of the author of this work. Yet, when all is said and done, there is no single person today, nor has there ever been a person, whose expertise and grasp and insights were sufficiently vast as to embrace the entire subject of this study.

Distance from Centres of Power and Status

Christianity in India is both ancient and modern. But, whatever its multifarious forms, Christianity in India is and always has been profoundly indigenous and, as such, deeply embedded within the culture of whatever community it is to be found. Contrary to ideologies propagated by its foes, and especially by various proponents of Hindutva and the Sangh Parivar, it is not and never has been 'colonial'. That is not to say there have not been both 'colonial' Christians and Christian 'colonials' in India, even in the classic Marxian sense—aliens who exploited peoples of India, including Christians of India. The same may also be said for missionaries in India who, since the time of the Apostle Thomas, came from overseas to settle on India's shores or to move inland and who have been coming to India and moving around within India during virtually each and every century. Rather, from the perspective of domination and exploitation, numbers of pre-colonialist, non-colonialist, anti-colonialist, and post-colonialist missionaries who worked within the continent vastly exceeded those, mainly some of those belonging to arrogantly Eurocentric missionary societies, whose attitudes toward 'Native' Christians were 'colonialistic'.

Almost without exception, Christian movements seem to have been most successful when least connected to dominion or empire. More often than not, movements of conversion occurred not because of, but despite, imperial expansion, usually in places furthest removed from imperial control; and, even so, they were most effective when introduced and led by indigenous or 'native' agents, rather than by foreign missionaries. When movements of

conversion did occur among despised or 'polluting' peoples, such as *adivāsi* tribes and *āvarna* castes, moreover, they tended to receive more encouragement and infrastructural support from non-British missionaries than from missionaries linked to the Anglican establishment[3] and the Church of Scotland. While the most notable achievements of Anglican and Scottish Church missionaries lay in building great institutions of higher learning for the benefit of the 'twice-born' and 'non-polluting' (*dvija* and *shudda*) classes of castes (*varnāshramadharma*) (the modern elites of the great urban centres, such as Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, and Madras), nonconformist and non-British missionaries from North America, northern and southern Europe, or Australia tended to focus more attention on providing encouragement and infrastructures for new Christian communities from the lowest strata and from the most remote forested frontiers. Again, depending on how such terms are defined, movements with the most spectacular results occurred in principalities not yet directly under Indo-British rule, such as in Thanjavur and Tirunelveli and Travancore, before they came under British rule, or in *adivāsi*-controlled areas throughout the subcontinent, but especially in frontier mountains of the north-east that surrounded the Assam Valley through which ran the great Brahmaputra River. Conversely, modern Hinduism, and revivalist forms of Hindutva, can be seen as having been direct consequences of the Raj and of elite or upper-crust American and British missions located within the urban centres of the Raj.

While many more stories have yet to be told about different Christian communities than could be included in this study, more hypotheses of this nature are needed for further investigations into anomalies and contradictions of relations between *āvarna* or *adivāsi* and missionaries from America, Britain, and Europe. Thus, ironically, Christian movements sometimes fared far better in non-Christian domains—in such realms as those of the Velama Nayakas of Madurai, Marava Tevars of Ramnad, Setupatis of Sivaganga, Kallar Tondaimans of Pudukottai, Maratha Rajas of Thanjavur, the Nayar Raja Vermas of Travancore; or in the tribal domains of the Nagas, Khasis, Jaintas, Garos, and Mizos of the north-east, not to mention domains of the Chins, Kachins, Shans, and Karens of Burma. They did less well in areas where elite caste officials sat on High Court benches and occupied other positions of importance within the Raj. Whether inadvertently or deliberately, those who represented the *varnāshramadharma* communities of the families from which they themselves came could never wholly free themselves from social bias or from a personal consciousness of purity and pollution that was part of their own heritage.

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[3] Some may point to exceptions, such as the Tirunelveli diocese; but it is useful to remember that movements there resulted from the efforts of 'Tanjore Christians' whom Schwartz and other Tranquebar missionaries had trained.

Distance from imperial (or national) intrusion was one factor explaining the rapid expansion of Christianity. Another, deserving no less consideration, is historiographic. *Āvarna* and *adivāsi* Christian communities have yet to receive the attention that they deserve. Past scholarship has tended to devote more attention to 'caste' Christians and often to do so within a 'triumphalist' frame of reference. In so doing, they were celebrating, if not glorifying, divine actions manifest in 'Trophies of Grace'. These were Christians who came from castes within the upper ranks of *varnāshramadharma* and who tended to contribute to 'inter-religious dialogues' or enter into theological discussions with elite missionaries of the West and with 'Hindu' notables, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, and Mohandas Gandhi. As such they still fascinate scholars of 'Eastern religion' in the West. Judging from the abundance of biographical, literary, philological, philosophical, and other kinds of published scholarly works that have filled libraries in the West, by far the largest amount of attention has been focused upon these kinds of Indian Christians. Especially attractive were such Brahman Christians of Bengal and Bombay as Krishna Mohan Banerjea, Kali Charan Banerjea, Nehemiah (Nilakantha) Goreh, Narayan Vaman Tilak, and Brahmanabandhab Upadhyayaya—and, of course, of Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (Dongre). Many of these Brahman Christians focused their attention on intellectual or mystical-cum-spiritual (*bhakti*) issues—on matters that were eclectic and esoteric, literary, philosophical, and theological—that sought for links between the great traditions from which they themselves had come and from which most of them never entirely parted. Even Pandita Ramabai's own *bhakti* devotionalism did not begin to veer away from her own pure (*sa-varna* and *shuddam*) identity until after her third Christian conversion and the 'Holy Ghost' revival that broke twenty years later (1905) at the Mukti Mission in Kedgaon. Nor can the Christian career of Sadhu Sundar Singh be seen as reflecting a close identification with either *adivāsi* or *āvarna* forms of Indian Christianity as such, so much as his mysterious disappearance as a *sannyasi*.

Double Definitions and Dual or Multiple Identities

Again, what is significant about all forms of Christianity that have taken root within the Indian subcontinent is the strong sense of dual identity, as found in separate and unique origins and as distinct from the universality of the faith that they claimed. If the Christianity, and Christian faith, they appropriated was understood as belonging to a universal 'world religion' that transcended parochial barriers of culture, ethnicity, or nationality, Christians in India, whether high caste or low caste or tribal in origin, could never forget or shed their own legacy of unique 'birth' or *jāt*. Nowhere on earth,

perhaps, has this 'duality' been so pronounced or so persistent as in India. Nowhere has such a double identity been clearer than in the legacy of ancient Thomas Christians. These high-caste Christians, Malayalam-speaking communities of ancient lineage, concentrated in towns and villages along the Malabar coast from Kaniya Kumari to as far north as Mangalore and Bombay, despite being revitalized or reconverted, have retained such pride in birth and lineage, such sensitivity to purity and pollution, that their sense of belonging within *varnāshramadharma* has remained, for most, ex-tremely strong. But the same can be said for virtually all Christians in South Asia. On the whole, Christians in various countries of South Asia that were all at one time inhabitants of some part of the continent that was under the Raj were not as closely identified by nationality as by caste. This meant that virtually all Christians who tended to identify themselves as much by birth, caste, and community as by church, denomination, or theological outlook have always tended to possess a dual identity.

There is a sense, therefore, wherein Christianity itself has never existed solely in the abstract—except perhaps as a spiritual or theological ideal. The term 'Christian' is more of an adjective than a noun. The term, as indicated in previous chapters, is a property of something else, a concept that implies 'diminishment'—which is indicative of positional subordin-ation. In other words, things that are 'Christian'—activities, communities, doctrines, entities, whether institutions or individuals or missions—have always been defined by their relationship to the person of Jesus Christ, to whom they are subject.[4] Each and every Christian community has tended to possess a deep and strong sense of its own ethnic identity. Such kinds of consciousness, indeed, have been magnified in India. Seen from this perspective, there never was such a thing, nor is there any such thing, as a purely 'Indian' Christian, in any basic or generic sense. Only more earth-bound, 'hybrid', or 'hyphenated' forms of Christians can be identified within historical understandings. Such Christians were, and are, pinned to the earth by their local cultures and languages—and, most of all, by their birth (*jāt*), or caste. Within the Indian Empire of the 'Raj', as in all of South Asia today, there have been no Christians that were not defined by a double identity that was more narrowly limited in terms of being hybrid or 'hyphenated' Christians—that were able to escape the contextual features of ethnicity as rooted, first and foremost, in family and lineage.

The Gospel message, in its humanizing universality, directly challenged such fissiparous tendencies of all religious traditions in India, Christian and non-Christian alike. As such, it uncovered the basic contradiction

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[4] David Jeffrey, *Newsletter of the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies* (Madison, Nov. 2000), 1–3.

between *varnāshramadharma*, as defined by genomes of birth, blood, and earth and as privileged by classical civilization (*Sanskriti*) and tradition (*sanātana-dharma*), and the message of a single *imago Dei* that, both biologic-ally and theologically, inclusively defined a single nature for the whole of humankind. Since, on one hand, missionaries from abroad were alien and since, on the other hand, no movement could ever occur that was not conveyed and expressed by a local agent within idioms of that local agent's own 'mother tongue' and culture, no single local Christian community or congregation in India seems ever to have escaped encapsulation within its own ethnic, hyphenated, hybrid identity—the paradox of its representing both parochial and universal claims. Each Christian community has pos-sessed its own hyphenized and hybridized character, its own 'dual identity' or 'dual citizenship', one on earth and subject to Caesar and the other in heaven subject to God.

Especially important for the history of Christianity in India has been the role of 'primal religion'. As elaborated briefly in the Introduction, under-standing this role is crucial for trying to explain how and why Christianity was received and appropriated by some communities and not by others. This concept, positing the existence of a substratum of religion universally present within all humankind, holds that no person or people, anywhere in the world or at any time in the past, has been without deeply embedded religious impulses. However articulated, 'primal religion' is anterior to any superimposed religious impulses or subsequent religious institutions.[5] All believers and non-believers are primalists—before anything else they may believe, since primal religion is a universal, worldwide precondition, manifest in all but confined to no one people, culture, or region. So postulated, therefore, 'primal' does not mean, nor does it even imply, 'primitive'. Scholars who have studied primal religious phenomena, first in Africa and then in Asia, America, and Oceania, noticed that, far from being antagonistic, primal religions and Christian faith sometimes have possessed a special affinity. This affinity has allowed peoples from primal religious backgrounds to successfully encounter cultural change, 'embracing Christ without loss to their sense of cultural identity. This means turning to Christ what is already there and not a total denigration of one's past.'[6] As applied to India, this category of analysis has served as an explanatory device for understanding how and why so many *adivāsi* and *āvarna peoples*, but by

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[5] Andrew Walls, '10 Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 121 (121–39).

[6] Gillian M. Bediako, 'Primal Religion and Christian Faith: Antagonists or Soul-Mates', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 3: 2 (Dec. 2000), 5 (citing Walls). Andrew Walls, 'Culture and Conversion in Christian History', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 43.

no means all, turned to Christianity, often *en masse*. On this matter, much more research still needs to be done.

Subordination of Critical Theory

Readers of the foregoing chapters will have noticed that little or no space has been given to deeper examinations of intellectual questions or problems, whether historiographic, ideological, or theological in character. Altogether missing is any consideration of what is sometimes called 'discourse analysis' as this has arisen out of 'post–modern' or 'post–colonial' fashions of our time. Reasons for this are manifold. At the most practical level, a choice had to be made between such pursuits and the need to adequately address and cover the enormous number and complexity of Christian communities as these have grown and proliferated during nearly 2,000 years since the time when, at least by legend and strongly held traditions, the Apostle Thomas came to Malabar.

Thus, no attempt has been made to dwell on fine points of hermeneutics, with special reference to the many kinds of source materials that various scholars have interpreted, accepting the usefulness of many sources at face value, without subjecting them to the technologies of higher criticism. Some historians have been like news journalists or reporters who, since the time of Herodotus and Thucydides, did their best to 'tell what happened' and 'describe their observations' from as immediate and objective a perspective as possible. Others who came after them, including readers of later generations, have had to interpret words used to narratively describe 'facts' about what happened, in either critical or uncritical terms. But what has been understood as a historical judgement, therefore, has always had to be somewhat contingent, resting only upon evidence so far uncovered and upon innate frailties of any human perspective. All observers and observations are, to some degree, fallible. Yet that fallibility does not exonerate them from the intellectual or moral responsibility of trying to strive for accuracy, objectivity, and truth. Nor can the human imagination ever entirely free itself from the 'what ifs' of plausible counterfactuality. Modesty and self-awareness are required for acknowledgement of those pitfalls that come from personal bias to which, whether consciously or unconsciously, every person is in some degree prone. Without a capacity for detachment, or an ability to suspend judgement when looking at sets of facts, the writing of a plausible or reliably valid history is not possible.

Yet, for these and other reasons, a tactical decision had to be made in the writing of this work. Christians would not be defined in doctrinal or theological terms, except inasmuch as such terms were inherent to the self-conscious identity of a particular historical community. Rather, due to the

extreme variety of Christians and Christian communities, self-conscious identifications of individuals or groups as, in fact, being 'Christian' has been taken at face value, without exploring various anomalies or forms of self-contradiction between claims and actions related thereto. Few if any Christians, throughout the course of history, after all, have been immune from behaviours that were patently un-Christian, at least in the eyes of others if not in terms of shamefaced self-acknowledgement. At the same time, sensitive and thoughtful Christians have had to acknowledge when actions and words of non-Christians were, in fact, 'Christian' in some sense—perhaps to be explained by them as manifestations of the *imago dei* in all human beings, however apparently degraded, depraved, and ungodly they may have seemed to be.

What is Missing from This Study

Some may have good grounds for complaining that this or that 'important' Christian, Christian community, or Christian institution has been left out of this narrative history of Christianity in India. This complaint is valid. Indeed, many important elements of Christianity in India are excluded. These exclusions arise from the perennial need to decide that some things had to be left out. While one may empathize with such judgements, and feelings of disappointment, if not outrage, that may be engendered thereby, two or three grounds for exclusion or non-exclusion may help to explain the problems encountered and procedures pursued. The first and most obvious explanation is that, given the vast number and variety of things Christian in India, there neither was nor is any way to include all that even this writer feels is important. The task of the historian, therefore, is mainly one of deciding what to leave out, however worthy it may seem. Criteria can seem arbitrary. Second, emphasis has been placed upon what was and is indigenous. It is *Indian* Christians, or Christian communities *within* the continent, together with *their* institutions, with which this work is primarily concerned. Alien, non-Indian, non-indigenous names have become important to the narrative only insofar as their actions or words are seen as having been consequential for Indian Christians or Indian Christian institutions. Thus, this work could never serve merely as a catalogue of contributions by many thousands of European or American missionaries who, during their heyday, may have numbered as many as 5,000 to 10,000. Among many who were undoubtedly important are such persons as Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur,[7] Mother

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[7] Arthur Jeyakumar, 'Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur, 1867–1951', *ICHR*, 36: 1 (June 2002), 5–11; Amy Wilson Carmichael, *Things as They Are: Mission Work in Southern India* (London: Morgan and Scott, [1903], 1977); Nancy E. Robbins, *God's Madcap: The Story of Amy Carmichael* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1962; 1987); Elizabeth Elliot, *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of*

Teresa of Calcutta,[8] Isabella Thoburn of Lucknow[9] and other noteworthy
missionary women,[10] as also such other remarkable institutions as the Zenana
Mission, the Basel Mission, the ('Plymouth') Indian Fellowship of Brethren
Assemblies,[11] the Salvation Army,[12] and the YMCA in India.[13] Each of these
has a story to tell and a massive literature that is both fascinating and
significant—and yet, alas, missing from these pages. Even the story of
enormously significant roles of those uniquely self-sacrificing groups of
Indian 'Bible Women' is also missing. The number of such exclusions is
such that perhaps another volume could be devoted to various desiderata.
The sheer immensity of such matters may, indeed, have been a factor that has
inhibited all earlier attempts to complete a single-volume history of Chris-
tianity in India.

However lamentable such exclusions, selection criteria have aimed to
capture the 'big picture' and to 'connect the dots' so as to see the larger
patterns in the history of Christianity in order to mould it into a single and
generalizable whole. This has required trying to climb outside one's own
identification and loyalties in order to capture some larger verity. Each
partisan Christian group that has a separate history has, for its own sake,
sometimes had to do less than this, sometimes for the sake of its own
survival, often in the face of dreadful persecution. But the scholarly
observer, especially if attempting to discover a larger truth, is obliged to
set aside parochial loyalty. 'Triumphalism' alone is not enough, especially

Amy Carmichael (Old Tappan, NJ: Flemming H. Revell Company, 1987); Frank Houghton, *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur* (London: SPCK, 1953).

[8] José Luis González-Salado, *Mother Teresa: Her Life, her Work, her Message, 1910–1997: A Memoir.* (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori Publications, c.1997); Aroup Chatterjee, *Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict* (Kolkata: Meteor Books, 2003); Edward Le Joly, *Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, [1985], c.1977–c.1983); James McGovern, *To Give the Love of Christ: A Portrait of Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity* (New York: Paulist Press, c.1978); Kathryn Spink, *Mother Teresa: A Complete Authorized Biography* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, c.1997).

[9] James Mills Thoburn Papers, MSS 112, Archives and Manuscripts Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University. 'Thoburn, Isabella', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from Encyclopaedia Britannica Premium Service, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9125994 (accessed 24 Jan. 2006).

[10] Maina Chawala Singh, *Gender, Religion, and 'Heathen Lands': American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s–1940s)* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000).

[11] E. B. Bromley, *They were Men Sent from God: A Centenary Record (1836–1936) of Gospel Work in India amongst Telugus in the Godavari Delta and Neighbouring Parts* (Bangalore: Scripture Literature Press, 1937). Mrs [H.] Groves, *Memoir of the Late Anthony Norris Groves* (London, 1856; 2nd edn. 1957); Paul Hyland, *Indian Balm: Travels in the Southern Subcontinent* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 50–63, 71–8, 99–110.

[12] Solveg Smith, *By Love Compelled: The Story of 100 Years of the Salvation Army in India* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, Ltd., 1981).

[13] M. D. David, *The YMCA and the Making of Modern India: A Centenary History* (New Delhi: National Council of YMCAs of India, 1992).

if one espouses Christian convictions, wherein, in theological terms, one holds that 'All Truth is God's Truth!'[14] and that historical truth, inasmuch as it can be acquired, however embarrassing it may be, need not be avoided. For this very reason, therefore, the old clichés and the fashionable stereotypes of the moment are never enough. To be able to avoid such traps, and to do so without being boring or pedantic, is to hope for a more cogent approach to historical understanding. In matters such as this, to be a relativist is to abandon the task of striving for better understanding of the whole, by means of as many, but by no means all, of its fragments as might be possible.[15]

What is unfortunate, in our day, is the degree to which historical understanding has become more of a hostage to ideological and political warfare, so that findings are themselves used as weapons for destroying what are deemed to be unpalatable verities and putting something more palatable in their place. This trend has become most apparent in attempts by militant forces of Hindutva and the Sangh Parivar, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (aka RSS), and those of its ferocious offspring like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and Bajrang Dal, to destroy any vestiges of evidence that might undermine claims of its own hoary past. To this end, especially during five years when the BJP, with support of its twenty allies inside and outside the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), controlled the Government of India, there was an attempt to completely 'saffronize' and 'sanitize' the past. Perhaps the most dreadful manifestation of this dogma came on 6 December 1992 in Ayodhya, when Hindutva forces stormed and destroyed the Babri Masjid (*Mosque*), vowing to replace it with a Ram temple (*mandir*). This event, with its aftermath of pogroms against Muslims in Bombay and elsewhere, that resulted in the destruction of many thousands of lives, forever erased notions of Hinduism as an eclectic embodiment of tolerance towards other religious communities. Another manifestation of this tendency has been the utilization of Census of India data to show that no more than 2.2 per cent of India's peoples are Christian. Considering how many of India's most oppressed peoples, especially hundreds of distinct *āvarna* (aka *Dalit*) and *adivāsi* peoples, are officially set apart and designated as below and beyond the official categories of 'Backward Castes' (BCs), 'Other Backward Castes' (OBCs), or 'Scheduled Castes and Tribes', it is small wonder that, as tactics in their own self-defence, such peoples do not list themselves as Christians, even as

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[14] For elaboration on this theme, I am indebted to Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977).

[15] Robert Eric Frykenberg, *History and Belief: The Foundations of Historical Understanding* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996).

they use baptismal Christian names for Christian worship and for other Christian activities. Thus, for socio-political and other purposes, many of India's Christians maintain a dual identity, using both Christian names and non-Christian names.

In the 1992 edition of his *People of India: Introduction* Kumar Suresh Singh, Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India, indicated that the Christians come to 7.3 per cent of India's total population.[16] The Census of India for 2001 indicated that India's total population, at that time, came to 1,013,661,777 persons. Thus, even using a less obsolete figure of 1,096,917,184, the number of Christians in India, put at 68 million (or 6.2 per cent) by the World Christian Database,[17] may in fact already be more than 80 million—or more than the population of any country in Western Europe, except one (Germany) which it nearly equals. Moreover, almost two-thirds of India's Christians come from castes that are *āvarna* (*Dalit*) or *adivāsi*.

Such a huge number, when seen in absolute terms, reflects an enormous expansion of missionary enterprise in India that has occurred since the departure of foreign missionaries. While precise and accurate figures are not available, estimates of the numbers of missionaries now working throughout India vary between 40,000 and 100,000, not even counting so-called 'mainline' and Catholic missionaries. Evangelical missionaries alone, excluding pastors and evangelists and missionaries within 'mainline' churches, are now being supported by over 200 agencies, 206 of which are members of the Indian Missionary Association.[18] Numbers of Catholic missionaries, both male and female, undoubtedly equal, if they do not surpass, numbers of non-Catholics.

Epilogue

Notwithstanding exclusions such as those mentioned above, many and various are the empty spaces in the history of Christianity that still remain unfilled within this study. Among these, some developments during the last half-century, especially during the past twenty years, need to be touched upon briefly, or described in enough detail to indicate their significance for the history of Christianity as a whole. Among these are the rapid rise and expansion (1) of Pentecostalism; (2) of indigenously led Christian movements or indigenously organized missionary movements; (3) of indigenously

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[16] Kumar Suresh Singh, *People of India: Introduction* (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1992), 211 (rev. edn. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[17] Website: http://worldchristiandatabase.org.

[18] Roger E. Hedlund, estimates in Draft on 'Indigenous Missionary Societies', for *Dictionary of South Asian Christianity* (*DSAC*) (New Delhi: ISPCK, forthcoming).

mounted opposition movements, especially militant Hindutva, Hindu na-
tionalism, together with increasing persecutions and martyrdoms resulting
therefrom; (4) of Indian forms of secularism and/or secularization; and,
finally, (5) of increasingly pervasive and influential forms of what some call
'churchless' Christians within societies of India, if not of South Asia as a
whole. Developments in each of these spheres may be seen as direct by-
products of indigenous Christian expansions within India.

'Charismatic' Christianity, or Pentecostalism

At the beginning of the twentieth century, and originating almost simul-
taneously in several parts of the Christian world, but often associated with
events emanating from 'Azusa Street' in Los Angeles, California, came
what, at least for India, may be called the Fourth Great Wave of Christianity
and Christian movements. Following after the earliest but manifold forms of
Orthodox, Syrian, or Thomas Christian movements, the manifold Catholic
(Latinate) movements that began after the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498,
and the Evangelical and Protestant movements that started in 1706 but
reached a crescendo by the turn of the twentieth century, Pentecostalism
surfaced in the Mukti Mission and in the Khasi–Jaintia Hills at almost the
same time. Such almost simultaneous manifestations or outbursts of charis-
matic events associated with revival among Christians were attributed to
'outpourings' of the Holy Spirit. They were accompanied, most of all, with
confession, healing, delivery from demons, evils, and fears, and with ex-
treme expressions of joyful emotionalism, if not also with various forms of
'tongues speaking' (glossolalia). Pentecostalism, whether from America,
Sweden, Australia, or Russia, to name but four out of dozens of places,
rapidly spread across and around the entire world, becoming the single most
momentous recent missionary movement in Christian history. Within one
century, manifold rivers, streams, and brooklets of these charismatic forms
of Pietistic Christianity have grown to nearly half a billion adherents and
make up over a quarter of all Christians in the world. Nor does the growth
of such movements seem to be anywhere near coming to an end.

   Nowhere have charismatic forms of Christianity been more in evidence
than in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia—including China,
Korea, and India. Even while long less evident in Europe, where such
movements were scorned or squelched as coming 'not from above but
from below', there are signs of a gradual lessening of opposition, and that
theological neglect may be ending. Among Christians of the Indian con-
tinent, Pentecostalism has also made significant headway. This impact has
been especially clear in South India, as also in north–east India, where most
Christians are located, to the extent that some 20 per cent of Evangelicals/

Protestants have had some kind of involvement with this huge movement. Especially within the great cities and within various encapsulated 'village' enclaves of such cities, one can be startled by the appearance of marching parades of Pentecostals, bravely clad from head to foot in snow white garments, and courageously singing hymns for all to hear, often to the beat of drums. Likewise, a foreign traveller staying in a small hotel or guest house may be awakened at dawn by the joyful singing of gospel songs, coming from an unseen congregation hidden from view and singing from behind some adjacent compound wall.[19]

What makes this movement difficult to assess or to study systematically, especially in India, is its almost complete lack of ecclesiastical cohesion; and, consequently, its lack of any single source of either historical records or theological works. Such is the extremely volatile or fissiparous nature of Pentecostalism in India that trying to capture, hold, or examine its various manifestations is like trying to gather up bits of mercury from a floor or table. Yet, for all that, there can be no denying the profound impact that this movement has had.

Nevertheless, despite such inherent difficulties, a careful and scholarly study has been completed by Professor Michael Bergunder of Heidelberg University. This work, entitled *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the 20th Century: A Historical and Systematic Study*,[20] rests upon a systematic analysis of extensive empirical research that the author conducted. Most of the information, drawn by methodologies for collecting oral traditions, came from hundreds upon hundreds of interviews with individual leaders of South Indian Pentecostalism, as elicited from their own understandings of events that transpired over the past century. Data gathered in this fashion was augmented by manuscript and printed works that were mainly in the form of such desiderata as edifying or celebratory pamphlets, programmes, schedules, souvenirs, address lists, broad sheets, and polemics—much of this aimed at the propagation of the Pentecostalist Gospel. Special attention was devoted to describing in detail the many independent congregations and their interrelations. Inherent fissiparous tendencies, while described in

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[19] Lionel Caplan, *Class and Culture in Urban India: Fundamentalism in a Christian Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), is but one small sample of studies on this phenomenon.

[20] English edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, in progress) of *Die südindische Pfingstbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine historische und systematische Untersuchung*, Studien zur Interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums 113 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999). Also see: 'Constructing Indian Pentecostalism: On Issues of Methodology and Representation', in Allan H. Anderson and Edmond Tang (eds.), *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 177–213; 'From Pentecostal Healing Evangelist to Kalki Avatar: The Remarkable Life of Paulaseer Lawrie alias Shree Lahari Krishna (1921–1989)', in Robert Eric Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. Eerdmans, 2003), 357–75.

detail, were juxtaposed against frenetic networking tendencies that generated increasingly self-conscious identities that were quite distinct from 'other' or more 'mainline' forms of Christian identification. In historical terms, various forms of Pentecostalism have never been detached from extensive international contacts and partnerships, such as Assemblies of God in America or congregations in Sweden, Australia, and other parts of India, including all of South Asia. One can see ways in which Indian Pentecostals have become part of a rapidly emerging worldwide charismatic Christianity.

As a result of this work, we now have a systematic analysis of various profiles of Pentecostal Christians in various parts of South India, with special reference to interactions with forms of folk and popular religiosity that have emerged in each locality. More often than not, this has involved encounters with charismatic healing or liberation from fears of 'demonic forces' and 'evil spirits'. Charismatic struggles, within this movement, have been viewed as titanic struggles between darkness and light. Heavy emphasis upon personal piety, experience, and praxis has resulted in little heavy or systematic theological thinking, thinkers, or treatises. Conversely, responses of other Christian communities to Pentecostalism in India have tended, on the whole, to be prejudiced, rejecting, and simplistic—in short, anything but ecumenical in spirit. As a result of such attitudes, complexities are neither examined in depth, nor carefully differentiated.

Indigenous Missionary Movements

Missionaries from abroad are, for the most part, long gone. In their place, at any given time, are many more indigenous missionaries than all the foreign missionaries who came to India over the past five centuries. These benefit from as many if not more supporting infrastructures, especially in educational and medical institutions, than ever before. This sweeping assertion is difficult to document, if for no other reason than that to do so would further alarm opponents of Christianity in India, provoking even more massive waves of persecution and martyrdom than have already been suffered in many parts of the continent, but especially in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and other parts of North India and also wherever there are already substantial or rapidly growing numbers of *āvarna* or *adivāsi* Christian communities. Upwardly mobile waves of new converts are seen by agrarian gentry as posing a threat to their age-old dominion or as an escape from age-old thraldom of servility under the caste system.

No conclusion seems more clear than the increasing volume of mass movements of conversion during the past half-century since the end of imperial rule and the departure of most foreign missionaries. So many and so

massive have been such movements that, except for the rise of charismatic or Pentecostal Christianity already mentioned, they cannot be described in detail. Particularly noteworthy have been accelerating mass movements among various *āvarna* and *adivāsi* communities. No less noteworthy is the fact that, whereas during the nineteenth century, Christian movements led the way to liberation among *āvarna* peoples, ever since the 1920s and 1930s when Dr B. R. Ambedkar generated a nationwide movement of protest, self-respect, and upward mobility among these people—activities that brought him into a headlong collision with Mohandas Karimchand (Mahatma) Gandhi—such peoples in recent decades have increasingly taken to calling themselves by the name *Dalit*.

The term *Dalit*, like *āvarna* (meaning 'colourless') or *panchama* (meaning 'fifths' to distinguish it from the four pure or *sa-varna* ranks of castes) means, quite literally, 'crushed'—metaphorically likening what is crushed to a woman's glass bangle being ground into the dirt by an oppressor's shoe or boot. 'Fifths' and *Dalits*, in other words, describe 'the people who are *achuta*, or untouchable . . . people too impure, too polluted, to rank as worthy beings'. Such peoples are 'shunned, insulted, banned from temples and higher caste homes, made to eat and drink from separate utensils in public places, and, in extreme but not uncommon cases, raped, burned, lynched, and gunned down'.[21] But after Gandhi sought to include them by definition within the Hindu fold, from which they claim they have been excluded, by calling them 'Harijan' (meaning 'children of Hari' or Krishna), without their ever becoming truly liberated, the term 'stuck in their throats' and the new term *Dalit* came into vogue. *Dalit*, in short, has become the banner term of choice for those who are in a state of perpetual rebellion against untouchability. Hundreds of distinct peoples now seek for horizontal bonds with other communities who, in aggregate, now see themselves as numbering at least 160 million and perhaps as many as 200 million—despite the 1991 Census of India aggregate for Buddhist-Hindu-Sikh *Dalits*, excluding Muslim and Christian *Dalits*, being 138,223,227.[22]

Today, it is difficult to know how many scores if not hundreds of indigenous missionary agencies are functioning in India, especially since the subject is so politically sensitive. Prominent among such agencies are the Friends Missionary Prayer Band and the Indian Evangelical Mission. The largest, coming out of the north-east, are the Synod Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church, the Zoram Baptist Mission of Mizoram, and the Nagaland Missionary Movement. Since Baptists feel no hierarchical

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[21] Tom O'Neill, 'Untouchable', *National Geographic*, 203: 6 (June 2003), 2–37. This is but a recent small sample in a vast literature on this subject (dealt with in Chapter 1).

[22] James Massey, *Dalits in India: Religion as a Source of Bondage or Liberation with Special Reference to Christians* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors and ISPCK, 1995), 14.

structures are necessary, but form voluntary associational polities, cooper-
ating for the sake of mutual edification, encouragement, education, mission,
and other common concerns, some 2.5 million of them are linked within
some thirty separate denominational agencies, some of which are drawn
together in all-India or all-north-east India associations. Thus, for example,
when one American Baptist missionary faced retirement from thirty years of
work among the *adivāsi* Korkus, where she had translated Scripture and
established a small congregation, her prayers for a replacement were
answered when a new Tamil missionary agency asked if they could send a
young couple to take her place—something which they did a quarter of a
century ago.[23] Many such agencies have been drawn together by the Indian
Missions Association (IMA) which, since its founding in 1977, has grown by
leaps and bounds and attained increasing stature, inasmuch as its 206 mem-
ber agencies claim some 40,000 missionaries. The Catholic counterpart to
the IMA, under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) consti-
tuted in 1944, is the Commission for Evangelization, and various indigenous
missionary institutes that in varying degrees come under its purview.

Thus, ongoing movements of *āvarna* or *Dalit* peoples turning to Chris-
tianity, as well as *Dalit* Christian movements against elite classes of Chris-
tians, have become part of a much broader movement of *Dalit* Revolution,
with consequences being such that they cannot be overlooked. Here again,
as shown in previous chapters, one movement can be singled out for closer
scrutiny so as to gain a deeper understanding of the entire phenomenon
of ongoing conversion movements among *Dalit* (*āvarna*) peoples. It is
difficult, in this regard, to find a more dramatic example of a single
movement of rapid conversion in recent decades than what has been
occurring among Bhangis, especially those of the north who live within
the state of Uttar Pradesh.

At the very bottom of many layers of *Dalit* degradation lie this most
oppressed of all peoples. *Bhangis* are, by definition, viewed as virtually the
same as excrement. This is because, for ages beyond memory, each of their
women, whether a small girl or an aged widow, is obliged to go into latrines
and to scrape up by hand all defecations or faeces of the previous night and,
after depositing this into a handmade reed basket, carry this load away on
her head. Due to the loose weave of such baskets, nothing stops their
disgusting contents from dripping down upon the woman's face and cloth-
ing as she carries each head load. The quarantined village ghetto where she
and her people live invariably lies beyond the pale of the village proper. It is
small wonder that, being forced to do what she does, her people have always

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[23] Email letter from Roger E. Hedlund (Chennai, 23 Feb. 2006). This was but one of several
agencies that began to do missionary work among Korku peoples.

been despised and treated as 'untouchable'. Upper-caste people could justify the custom of keeping 'sweeper' people for such necessary tasks which, while dirty and polluting, are essential for the 'smooth functioning of society'. Hence, lowly and poor *Bhangis* have been forced, by circumstance of birth, to forever dwell beyond the bounds of *Sanskriti* civilization and its hallowed traditions, forever denied literacy or other means by which to escape perpetual thraldom.[24] *Chamars*, another comparable community of *Dalits* in North India, did little to help and much to hinder *Bhangi* peoples. Such patterns of antipathy at the bottom of the social hierarchy were, and are, common throughout India. Efforts to escape sometimes resulted, especially in the state of Bihar, in whole busloads of women and children being incinerated, or with their men being gunned down. That most of such events have gone unreported by the world's media is in itself a reflection of acute indifference among modern, middle-class people of India, despite the fact that some have organized to end gross forms of inhumanity.

Within the vast state of Uttar Pradesh, containing over 166 million people and over 20 million *Dalits*, nearly one million *Banghis* have become Christians during the last twenty years. The roots of the *Banghis* Christian Movement lie in the nineteenth century—some *Bhangis* had responded to the Gospel and sent their children to schools being run by American Presbyterian missionaries.[25] But, after the coming of Indian Independence in 1947, the formation of the Church of North India, and the departure of most missionaries from India, *Bhangi* congregations had been all but abandoned—left to sink into their age-old circumstances of oppression.

The revival of this particular *Dalit* Christian movement began with the vision of one person. Philip Prasad, as a destitute village boy, persuaded a Brahman teacher to let him attend the village school. In order to do so, he had been obliged to sit outside the schoolroom and apart from other students, on a pile of fresh cow dung. Philip's paternal grandfather, the first Christian in the family, had been beaten and thrown out of his ghetto. After his death six months later, further transformation was led by grandmothers on both sides of the family, steady pioneers that held the line against oppression. These two women kept doing their filthy work into old age; but they refused to train anyone else and, instead, sent their girls to mission schools where they became models of what liberation in Jesus Christ might bring.

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[24] Rama Sharma, *Bhangi, Scavenger in Indian Society: Marginality, Identity, and Politicization of the Community* (New Delhi: MD Publications, 1995).

[25] John C. B. Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1976), 254 n. 89; C. H. Bandy, 'The Building of the Church among Village Communities. II: The North Indian Presbyterian Mass Movement', *International Review of Missions*, 8 (Apr. 1919), 97.

Not realizing that what was being taught by the village teacher covered many grades, Philip absorbed everything that was being taught during a single year. An itinerant missionary who happened to see that the boy was intelligent asked his father to let him take Philip away to a boarding school in Farrukhabad. Similar kindnesses from strangers later enabled this penniless lad to enter Ewing Christian College. There, among mostly non-Christian students, his impoverishment led to tuition fees being waived, to gifts of food, and to being allowed to sleep on a ping-pong table outside the dormitory. Later, after employment under Kurien Jacob in the Christian (Presbyterian) Student Centre at the University of Allahabad, he had been offered a scholarship to attend the Theological Seminary of Dubuque University (Iowa). After his ordination at Mankato, Minnesota, in 1962, and his marriage to Elizabeth, an American fellow student whom he had met at Dubuque, he had gradually moved from position to position until this led to his becoming City Manager of Fresno, California. Yet, over the course of his highly successful career in America, his heart had kept returning to memories of his humble origins, sacrifices made by his grandmothers, and the plight of his people in North India.

Unable to forget them, Philip Prasad travelled to India in December 1983; and, while visiting his sister in Shikohabad, rode a bicycle out to a village where a congregation had once existed. A grizzled old villager asked him who he was; and, on learning that he was 'a pastor', incredulously asked, 'Where have you been?' The words struck Philip's heart like an electric shock. Then, after a long pause, he replied: 'I am here now. It is Christmas Day and I would like to hold a worship service with you.' Villagers soon gathered around him, retrieving termite-riddled Bibles from tiny tin chests where they kept their most precious treasures. With hair slicked back, fresh clothes on their backs, and copper coins in each palm, they gathered and sang remembered verses of songs and verses of Scripture. When worship was over, the old man led Philip to his thatched hut. There he dug up an earthen jar of coins and shoved this into his hand, declaring sternly: 'You did not come. We did not know where you went. We tried to carry on without you for years. This holds offerings we collected over these years. Now, please take it!'

The event was an epiphany. A mass movement began. Several more bicycle trips to an ever widening circle of villages and towns followed. What Philip found shocked him. Whole villages had refused government-offered 'affirmative action' incentives that would have required them to renounce their Christian faith. Their sacrifices moved Philip to take immediate action. He called his wife in Fresno and indicated that he wanted to use their life savings to work among his own people. What had happened to him was a 'burning bush' experience, like that of Moses in the wilderness. He felt God

was sending him to lead his people out of bondage and slavery into a 'promised land'. Without hesitation, Elizabeth agreed! Philip wired the City of Fresno to say that he would not be returning.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, the number of *Bhangi* (*Dalit*) Christians within the Rural Presbyterian Church of North India—calling itself 'The Mandal' ('The Circle' or 'Sphere')—is nearing one million. Over 700,000 regular members are connected to an indigenous and self-sustaining movement of expansion; another quarter-million worshippers are under regular instruction prior to baptism and induction into the vanguard of the movement; and 10,000 'new brothers and sisters' are being added to the RPC Church every month. Separate settlements, similar to 'villages of refuge' mentioned in previous chapters, provide assistance to families who flee from persecution—from severe repercussions that occur when former upper-caste masters learn that their hereditary menials will no longer serve in demeaning tasks. Providing literacy and numeracy for all females lies at the very heart of the entire movement—with uniformed girls, and boys, attending boarding schools (where they can be protected from molestation). Many hundreds of primary schools, scores of high schools and vocational training centres, land reclamation and industrial establishments, a network of medical facilities, and a theological school and a nascent college have provided an institutional infrastructure for thousands of 'pastor-teacher couples' and 'barefoot' medical practitioners. Each 'pastor couple' is equipped with a place to live and such basic equipment as a bicycle, books, and other items essential for sustaining the new congregation to which they are sent. Each such congregation, in turn, has become an outpost for further expansion.

That all of this activity has occurred within the heart of the 'Cow Belt'—where various forces of Hindutva pose a constant and serious threat—has made this movement all the more astonishing. That outbreaks of violence are not more frequent or destructive, despite occasional incidents, is due to the adroitness with which the entire movement, now no longer being so directly led by its *Gnanaji*, Philip Prasad, is adopting chameleon-like cultural symbols that integrate the movement into the wider 'Hindu' society.[26] These indigenous symbols of primal religion have served to harness the movement to a carefully orchestrated organization that has been dispersed across the length and breadth of Uttar Pradesh. Members of this movement call themselves *Dalit Avatāris*. They see themselves as the redeemed followers of the

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[26] What happened among *Bhangis* can be compared with a similar movement that began to break out in the Punjab among the Chuhras in the 1870s. The mass movement of Chuhras to Christianity started in 1873 when a crippled Chuhra named Ditt walked into Sialkot and asked for baptism, after which he brought family and friends to the faith. By 1913, 58,034 Chuhras had been baptized: Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India*, 231 ff.

'Crushed Incarnation of God' who, for their sake, himself became 'the *Bhangi* avatār' par excellence, and by his crucifixion has paid the price for each of them and has, thereby, identified himself with all Crushed peoples everywhere.[27]

   The cultural, economic, and social transformation of this *āvarna* (aka *Dalit*) community, where little girls and boys have become literate and have gone on to high school and college, however astonishing such events may seem, has been far from unique among movements occurring in other *Dalit* communities of India. Indeed, whether in the Dangs of Gujarat or in the Chambal badlands of Madhya Pradesh (Central India), or among dozens of other communities across the length and breadth of the continent, similar movements have broken out. Predictably, such movements have resulted in violent reactions, of increasing frequency and ferocity—especially from the organized agencies of 'Hindutva' and the Sangh Parivar. While many of the more violent reactions are currently less well reported, especially since the 2004 defeat of BJP rule within the Government of India, the forces behind them have not disappeared and violent outbreaks continue to occur.

Hindutva Opposition to Christians

'Hindutva', meaning 'Hinduness', is a nativist melding of Hindu fascism and Hindu fundamentalism. That it is a profoundly religious and profoundly, even aggressively political form of nationalism is also clear. From its earliest inception, its agents combined ambiguity with confrontation, compromise, and contradiction as tactical devices for achieving corporatist designs for gaining paramount power and imposing a totalitarian agenda upon all of India.[28] This agenda of 'Hindutva' or 'Ram Rajiya' (Rama's Realm) aims to forge 'One Nation', One State, One Culture, One Religion, and One Language. In Lord Rama's name, a single 'Hindu Nation' for the whole Indian continent—including Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal, if not Sri Lanka and Afghanistan—must be ruled by precepts of *Arya Dharm*, or *sanātana-dharma*.[29] *Sanskriti* icons, norms, and symbols, invoking cosmic and

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[27] Harold Kurtz, 'A Description of a People Movement to Christ among the Bhangis: An Amazing Touch of Jesus', unpublished paper based upon oral interviews and edited by Philip Prasad (Microsoft Word Document, dispatched to author on 14 Dec. 2005), 1–37.

[28] Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin, Viking, 2003).

[29] *Sanātana-dharma*: meaning 'Old' or 'Ancient Order/System' implying also 'Eternal Order' and/or 'Universal Order, or Rightness', with its structured categories or four colours (*chaturvar-niyas*). This term came into vogue in the 19th century before the concept of 'Hinduism' became pervasive, and was pushed by two kinds of champions: Pandit Guru Sahib (as in *Sanātanadharma-mārttanda*) via Manu's *Dharmasastra*; and Annie Besant's Central Hindu College at Varanasi, via special stress on the *Gita*—cf. *Sanatana Dharma: An Elementary Text-Book, or Hindu Religion and Ethics* (Benares, 1903, 1910), still in print.

eternal verities of Vedic Law, must be reflected in principles on which this nation must stand. Under this regime, the changeless social structures of the four colour classes (*chaturvarniya*), as manifest in *varnāshramadharma*, must maintain and preserve each person's birth or caste (*jāti*) in its rightful rank, status, and stratum of relative purity or impurity. Birth and earth, genomes in sacred blood and molecules of sacred soil, determine each and every place and rank within an all-encompassing and cosmic 'World Order' (*Vishwa Dharma*).

The roots of this movement can be traced to the 1820s and 1830s, when such agencies as the Vibuthi Sangam and the Dharma Sabha took strong exception to conversions that were occurring, especially those that disturbed the social and cosmic order. Christian conversion was seen as an impossibility, or as an attempt to impose an alien system upon hallowed traditions. This was the view of Dayananda Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj during the 1870s. Vivekananda's trip to America to attend the Parliament of World Religions persuaded theologically liberal Americans that a newly invented 'Hinduism' was a 'world religion', that this syndicated 'Hinduism' epitomized ultimate toleration for all religions, and that Pandita Ramabai's words about India were false. But, while Gandhi and other nationalist leaders tried to carry this more eclectic, inclusive, 'secular', and 'tolerant' ideology as far as possible, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar took Hindu nationalism in the opposite direction. His most famous work *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* was penned in 1922, while he was incarcerated in the Ratnagiri Prison for inciting the assassination of a British official. Long before his release in 1937, he had already become a cult figure. In his view, the people of the land were an intermingling of Aryan and non-Aryan (*Dasya*) blood and culture who, as such, would forever be one single nation (*rashtra*). For him, a 'Hindu' is any person whose blood arouses devotion to the sacred birth and sacred earth. The fundamentals of 'Hindutva', in short, are not only already imprinted within genetic codes of sacred blood and sacred soil, but in the sacred cosmic sound (*Brahma*) from whence all being and knowledge (*veda*) originate.

In 1925, twelve years before Savarkar's release from prison, an even more militant movement came into being. This was Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS. Its founder, Dr Kesnav Baliram Hedgewar, yet another Maratha (Chitpavan) Brahman, was deeply disturbed by the lack of over-arching 'national' institutions or ideological solidarity within India. In his view, linguistic, regional, and social fragmentation had opened the country to Muslim and European subjugation. Unhappy with the non-violent and non-cooperation (*āhimsa* and *satyāgraha*) tactics underlying Gandhi's campaigns, he decided to restore the 'essential unity' (*sanghatan*) of Hindutva.[30]

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[30] G. S. Hingle, *Hindutva Reawakened* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1999), covers his life and work.

One of his followers, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, was recruited by Savarkar to assassinate Gandhi. Gandhi, by striving to end the Hindu–Muslim mayhem that had resulted from the Partition of India in 1947, was seen as having betrayed Hindutva.[31] The shock of this event led to banishment of the RSS from the public arena—at least for two decades. During these years, its banners of militancy were raised, mainly in northern and western India, by the Jan Sangh. Actions of this political offspring of the RSS have eventuated in a gradually increasing drumbeat of anti-Muslim and anti-Christian protests, riots, and incidents of violence.

After more than 4,000 *adivāsis* turned Christian within the Surganju district in 1952, the governments of Madhya Pradesh and Madhya Bharat (a tribal region later incorporated into the former) were provoked by political agitations to take action. In doing so, they formally indicted the entire Christian community of India. Official committees were appointed to enquire into the activities of Christian missionaries, an action which led to a nationwide debate over minority rights under the framework of the Indian Constitution which had itself come into force only two years earlier, in 1950. The Christian Missionaries Activities Inquiry Committee was headed by M. Bhawani Shankar Niyogi, a retired Madhya Pradesh High Court Chief Justice. This inquiry, by calling into question the right to profess or practice the faith of one's *choice*, was anti-secular and totalitarian in the way it put all Christians on trial.[32] Christian organizations, in turn, protested against any actions entailing investigation of all Christian missionaries and Christian activities. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India sent a formal memorandum to Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, demanding that any such committee include representatives of 'religious minorities' and that its terms of reference be expanded to include investigations of harassment and persecution of Christians, and that the inquiry be conducted in accord with the Indian Commission of Inquiry Act of 1952. The Committee visited Christian hospitals, schools, churches, hostels, and leprosy homes, interviewed 11,360 persons in 700 villages, and received 375 written replies, only 55 of which were from Christians. Questions asked were blatantly leading, loaded, suggestive, and tendentious—e.g. 'Are any of the following [twelve] methods of conversion used?'; 'Are other fraudulent and unfair means?'; '[Does] conversion to Christianity adversely affect the national loyalty and outlook of converts?'; or '[Do] converts to Christianity tend to form a distinct communal group,

[31] A. G. Noorani, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2002).

[32] Sebastian C. H. Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Religious Conversion in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

indifferent or hostile to Indian traditions and culture and with affinity to foreign culture?' The investigation faced a barrage of public criticism and censure from Justice Hidayatullah for insulting religious sentiments when 'Christians may have no redress and mischief against them will have been done.'[33] After the two-volume Niyogi Report came out in 1956,[34] a sharp rebuttal was then administered by the Archbishop of Nagpur, Dr Eugene D'Souza. D'Souza carefully tore apart the entire report, piece by piece, especially refuting its findings of 'forced conversions' and 'foreign allegiances', pointedly decrying its lack of evidence, and showing how its conclusions 'damn[ed] the Christian for a suspect motive against which he [could] only offer a denial'.[35] The stream of articles and books resulting from the Niyogi Report has yet to end. Yet, even before this began, Mumbai Governor Hare Krishna Mahatab roundly repudiated it, declaring that it was 'caste Hindus' and not Christians who had been exploiting tribal peoples. A member of Parliament, Dr A. Krishnaswami, joined eight other non-Christian signatories in condemning the 'indiscriminate and extravagant attacks'; and M. M. Thomas, another prominent Christian leader, solemnly warned that the 'infant secular democratic state of India' might be killed in its crib by totalitarian ideas in official circles.[36]

Hindutva forces continued to grow, initially covertly and then overtly, until by the late 1990s they were able, by means of an electoral alliance, to take control of the Government of India and several states in North India. In 1964, the RSS supreme commander (*sarpracharak*) founded a militant missionary agency. Called the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), this organization aided the political wing of the movement, the Jan Sangh, that a dozen years later became the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP. Through cadres of these twin agencies, they prepared themselves for the campaigns against those they saw as enemies of Ram Rajiya. In the wake of sporadic outbreaks of violence against Muslims and Christians, full-scale mobilization took place in the name of Hindu Revivalism (*Hindutva Jagaran*). VHP shock troops dedicated themselves to the moulding together of a unified society. These, working through the VHP's own educational and missionary channels, strove to eradicate all traces of 'foreign' ideologies, institutions, and influences from the land. They resorted to forced 'reconversion' or *shuddi* (purification) ceremonies, attempting to draw *āvarna* and *adivāsi* Christian communities 'back' into the 'Hindu fold'. Yet those inherently 'backward'

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[33] Parvati Menon, 'An Old Debate in a New Context', *Frontline*, 16: 8 (10–23 Apr. 1999). Web citation: http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1608/16080380.htm.

[34] *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, Madhya Pradesh, 18th April 1956*, 3 vols. (Indore: Madhya Pradesh, Government Publication, 1956), known as 'Niyogi Report'.

[35] Menon, 'An Old Debate in a New Context'.

[36] Ibid.

and subhuman peoples were still seen as too polluting to drink good water or enter proper temples, and too stupid to understand *Sanskriti* norms. In 1976–7, in the wake of the Emergency and Indira Gandhi's subsequent defeat at the polls a year later, three Jan Sangh apparatchiks—Atal Behari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, and Brij Lal Varma—took over key ministries within the short-lived Janata government.

The VHP and other agencies of what became known as the 'Sangh Parivar' or 'Family' of Hindutva agencies emerged into the full limelight in 1981–2, after 1,500 *Dalits* in the Tamil village of Meenakshipuram turned to Islam. For the sake of Hindutva, a nationwide march in the name of 'Sacrifice for One Mother' (*Ekta Yajna*) carried the sacred waters from many rivers in order to force these converts back into the fold. In 1984, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, but before the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, an enormous 'chariot cavalcade' (*Rath Yatra*)—actually a motorcade of trucks—was mounted throughout India with the object of restoring the ground on which the Babri Masjid stood in the 'sacred city' of Ayodhya. This sacrificial campaign, led by Advani, for the 'Liberation of Ram's Earth' (Sri Ramajanmabhumi Mukti Yajna), mobilizing hundreds of thousands of devotees, went on for more than a decade and often ended in violence. In 1990, a giant *Rath Yatra* led to nearly 200,000 being taken into custody, thousands being injured, and many killed. The date of 6 December 1992, when more than 200,000 'volunteers' (*kar sevaks*) descended upon Ayodhya and then demolished the mosque, is so etched upon minds in India that it may never be forgotten. It was followed by terrible killings in Mumbai in which tens of thousands died, mainly the poorest and weakest of Muslims (children, women, infirm, and elderly). This kind of carnage was repeated in 2002, a decade later, in Gujarat when a Hindutva pogrom was allowed to take place under the eyes of BJP rulers both in Ahmedabad and New Delhi—when hundreds of lorries, full of pre-prepared bottles of gasoline bombs, were ready to burn thousands of Muslim women and children alive in order to teach all of India a lesson about Hindutva.[37]

By then, Christians in some parts of India were paying an ever high price to Hindutva for their faith. Thousands of incidents occurred, most of them involving church burnings—often because they ostensibly stood upon grounds once occupied by the temples of local deities—as well as killings, and pogroms of different sorts. So many and so brutal were the martyrdoms and persecutions that have been documented that they cannot begin to be described, much less listed. Events of this nature seem to have occurred particularly within a belt that stretches from the Dangs of Gujarat through

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[37] 'Hindu Nationalism vs. Islamic Jihad: Religious Militancy in South Asia', *Center Conversations*, Occasional Paper 17 (Washington: EPPC, Feb. 2003), 1–13.

barren wilderness to the forests of Orissa.[38] Such events gained international attention when an Australian missionary who had spent many years in Orissa was burned alive, together with his two small boys, while they were asleep within their camper-van. This atrocity evoked acute embarrassment and sorrow within the whole country, a feeling that was epitomized by N. Ram, editor/owner of *The Hindu*, when he called the nation to a 'Day of Shame' and organized a giant rally of condolence. At this rally, the Australian widow, Gladys Staines, forgave those who had wantonly murdered her husband and children. Yet, even when this response occurred, no words of regret or remorse were uttered by the Hindutva government in New Delhi.

Secularism and the 'Bogey' of Conversion

The term 'secular' comes from the West. Its Latin root *secularis*—from the noun *secularum*—means 'generation', 'age', or simply 'the world' as distinct from 'the church'. In medieval times, it denoted the affairs of 'this world' as distinct from 'the next world'—things 'earthly' or 'secular' as distinct from things 'religious' or 'spiritual' or 'sacred'. Departure from pursuits within the monastery for things 'mundane' or 'earthly' led to being 'secularized'. 'Secularization' was a process, denoting a conversion of usage. Things no longer used for spiritual purposes, whether buildings or clothes or implements or persons, became *secular*. Historically, movements from sacred to secular domains accelerated, expanded, and increased with the Reformation. The process of 'desacralization' escalated even further during the late seventeenth century, after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), and during the eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment. This, in turn, led to the rise of *secularism* as an ideology.

But, what brought about 'secularity' and the 'secular state' in India comes out of an almost entirely different historical context. Its roots lie deep within the logic of political expediency—of what it took and still takes to hold together highly pluralistic and segmented socio-cultural elements. Its logic lay in requirements of loyalty. Its secrets lay in the accumulated lore by which strong families, castes, and polities were held together. Concealed within the acumen of those who, by combinations of adroit diplomacy and controlled force, managed to 'persuade' others to become part of a political construction, was a savvy of knowing how and when to tell the difference between direct or raw power and indirect, more subtle influence—and fine distinctions between one and the other.

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[38] Sushil J. Aaron, *Christianity and Political Conflict in India: The Case of Gujarat* (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, June 2002), No. 23, 1–91. Hundreds of similar published reports exist.

What is now called the 'secular state' in India comes out of an almost entirely different historical context from that of the West. Its roots lie deep within political experience of the continent, rising out of memories of the understandings of centuries untold. Its origins, as indicated in several chapters of this book, lie in the wisdom and statecraft essential for holding any larger political structure in India together. Its essence is found in the character, content, and constraints of binding loyalty. Its secrets lie hidden within the accumulated lore of old and strong families, castes, and dominions: wherever political strength has been generated, preserved, and handed down from generation to generation. Whether in oral or written form, this wisdom has been buried deep within traditions passed down over many centuries, within memories and nurturing instincts by which any astute political system survived and surmounted external onslaughts or internal subversions. Concealed within the acumen of those who balanced adroit diplomacy and controlled force—whether to persevere and to persuade—are formulas for political constructions that were durable. Savvy of this sort, to repeat, came from knowing the difference between the exercise of raw power and subtle influence—and from exploring the fine distinctions between one and the other.

Elements of the 'constitutional system' erected by servants of the East India Company epitomized Enlightenment rationality. This system not only sanctified both 'rule of law'—indigenous in substance and alien in procedures—and 'separation of powers', but also enshrined a pluralistic system of 'neutrality' or 'non-interference' as a means (or policy) for managing ethno-communal and religious differences. This kind of 'neutrality' or 'non-interference' was a principle of positive statecraft rather than something negative. By means of charters and contracts and regulations, earlier policies and practices and precedents, the Company's governments formally took responsibility for the maintenance and support of ethnic community and religious establishments. In so doing, 'public' or 'state' protection of each and every religious or sectarian community was guaranteed. As a consequence, tens of thousands of temples, mosques, churches, *gurdwaras*, *mutths*, shrines, pilgrimage sites, and other locally hallowed institutions came under state protection. This is what the positive 'neutrality' or 'secularity' of the Raj meant. This system, profoundly indigenous or 'nativistic', was 'secular' in a uniquely Indian sense. Secular, in this sense, did not imply any separation from religion, so much as impartial and balancing of positive support for all established forms of religion. This was what being 'Hindu' or 'Indian' meant. Toleration was its watchword. Secularism in India, in short, was almost synonymous with ideological and religious pluralism. This device, engraved in India's Constitution, reflected the classical logic of *mandala-nyāya*. It was *not* what is now meant by Hindutva.

At the heart of what disturbs proponents of Hindutva is something they have called the 'bogey' of conversion. Two meanings of conversion have come into collision and have become confused—one of them essentially political and the other essentially theological. In cosmological, philosophical, or theological terms, proponents of Hindutva make little or no allowance for a total internal transformation of a person, much less of a group of persons. Persons were born to be what they are, as are all forms of life—from bird to butterfly, serpent to fish. Thus, if 'conversion' occurs—turning away from what one is—this must be due to external inducements of one kind or another, and hence of interference with the 'cosmic order'. It is a bogey—a goblin, a devil, or special object of dread and terror, whether or not it is imaginary, because it turns the world upside down. For the Christian, on the other hand, conversion is something done by divine agency—an act of God or the work of God's Spirit in transforming the inner life, as well as the outward condition of a person or community of persons. In Hindutva terms, all of Christianity is alien. It is an imposition made by foreigners who have disrupted a cosmic and sacred order. For Christians, the very term 'forced conversion' is an oxymoron—since conversion is a soul's voluntary response to the Grace of God.

Another name for 'forced conversion' is 'proselytization'. As far as historic Christian thinking and ecclesiastical declarations are concerned, neither form of activity is legitimate, moral, or valid. Attempts to 'induce' changes in religious identity, by any means, are seen as unethical and spurious. Merely external changes, without inner transformations 'of heart, mind, and will', do not count as being truly 'Christian', in any proper sense.[39] Not only are such forms of so-called conversion viewed as less than truly genuine, in an emotional, spiritual, or theological sense, they are also immoral and patently stupid, in any this-worldly, social, or political sense.[40] Nowadays sometimes seen as 'loathsome spiritual predators', those who engage in this kind of behaviour have been defined by the Christian world as follows: 'As for proselytism, the Geneva-based World Council of churches, grouping *inter alia* the largest Orthodox, Lutheran, and Anglican communities, defined it in 1961 as "a corruption of Christian witness", which used "cajolery, bribery, undue pressure, or intimidation, subtly or openly, to bring about seeming conversion." Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church of Vatican II defined proselytism as "a manner of behaving

[39] Historically, a proselyte (Latin: *proselytus*; Greek: προσήλυτος) was a Gentile convert to the Jewish faith. Generally, it is anyone who has come over from one opinion, belief, creed, or party to another. Proselytization is the action or process of making one or more proselytes. But, in our day, the meaning has also become much more invidious.

[40] As such, and especially as promoted by the BJP Government of India and its Hindutva or Sangh Parivar allies, 'conversion' became a hot button issue and continues to be so. See feature articles in *The Hindu* (25, 26 Jan. 1999), entitled 'The Conversion Bogie'.

contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, which makes use of dishonest methods to attract [persons] to a community—for example, by exploiting their ignorance or poverty." '[41] In other words, devout and genuine Christians in the world today are in agreement about the negative aspects of this concept. In 1991, both the WCC and the Vatican produced a joint statement which echoes these sentiments.[42]

Nevertheless, between 1998 and mid-2004, when Hindutva forces of the BJP held power at the Centre, under cover of the National Democratic Alliance, secular forces in India suffered, as did virtually all so-called 'minority' religious communities. Hostility toward Christians became apparent before the end of 1998. Bhil Christians in the Dangs of Gujarat came under attack,[43] with nuns and priests and congregations suffering death and with church buildings, schools, and hospitals going up in flames. At about the same time, attacks on Christians came from the Hindutva media. Especially virulent were blogs of the fundamentalist *Hindu Vive Kendra*, which put forward a stream of articles with such titles as 'Stop conversions!', 'Foreign Missionaries', 'Gandhi opposed conversions!', and 'Conversion row! U.S. should not interfere!'[44] Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, after personally visiting the Dangs, called for a national discussion on the subject of 'conversion' and its validity within Indian contexts.[45] The VHP sent cadres of volunteers and mendicant *sadhus* to 'reconvert' these forest peoples; but, far from slowing the rate of conversions, attacks on Christian *adivāsis* produced just the opposite effect—accelerating the 'Christianizing' process. The 'Terror' of Gujarat in 2002, when so many thousands were killed, merely confirmed suspicions that, beneath the surface, lay the long knives of those who wanted to keep *adivāsis* in subjection.[46] The failure of VHP 'reconversion' drives served to show that coercion achieved just the opposite of what Hindutva forces wanted.

Later in the same year, on 31 October 2002, a 'Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Bill' was passed by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. This law, in the face of fierce opposition, was the inspiration of

[41] Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch-Luxmoore, 'New Myths for Old: Proselytism and Transition in Post-Communist Europe', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 36: 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1999), 43–60.

[42] John Wilson, 'Proselytizers', *Books & Culture* (May–June 2000), 3, editorial.

[43] Irfan Engineer, 'Conversions in Dangs', *The Hindu* (23 Jan. 1999), Opinion page.

[44] Articles by such writers as M. V. Kamath, A. R. Kanangi, and Ashok Chowgule, in *HVK (Hindu Vive Kendra) Archives* (Oct. 1998 to Feb. 1999).

[45] P. Radhakrishnan, 'The Conversion Bogey—I' & II', *The Hindu* (25, 26 Jan. 1999), Opinion Sections.

[46] Ashgar Ali Engineer, 'The Conversion Controversy', *The Hindu* (20 Jan. 1999), Opinion Section; Garimella Subramaniam, 'The Non-Issue of Conversions', *The Hindu* (22 Jan. 1999), Opinion Section.

the AIADMK government of Jayalalithaa and her BJP (NDA) allies. Hindutva politicians throughout the country, led by the BJP president Venkaiah Naidu, declared that every state should enact a law along the same lines. Beyond a doubt, this ordinance made life for non-Hindu minority communities more difficult—creating an atmosphere in which Muslims, Christians, and *Dalits* became increasingly uneasy and insecure. Christians in Tamil Nadu expressed their continuing resistance by closing educational institutions, if only to show how many non-Christians were dependent upon them for their continued learning. It is noteworthy that the Hindutva NDA governments had hardly fallen as a result of elections in the spring of 2004 when, in due time, this law was repealed.

'Churchless' Christians and Continuing Christian Influence

One of the more astonishing recent developments has been a dawning realization among Christians of India that there are many 'other sheep out there' in India who, whether as individuals or as families, have embraced a personal (or devotional) faith in Jesus Christ. Followers of Christ are to be found both in rural and urban settings. Many of these 'Non-Baptized Believers in Christ' (NBBC), especially as these are found in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, are unequivocal in their affirmation of Jesus as the Messiah, as the only and true '*avatar*' of God and the only way to truly worship God. Research conducted throughout eleven districts of Tamil Nadu, with hundreds of men and women, young and old, from various birth communities and castes, has uncovered a surprising number of adherents and converts to personal faith in Christ who, while affirming this fact, do not mingle with congregations or darken the door of a church sanctuary—at least not in any regular way. (More research in other parts of India is needed.)

Questions raised by such findings are many and complex: Who are they and what are they like? What do such findings mean and what implications do such findings suggest for the future of Indian Christianity? And how is the historian, sociologist, or theologian to deal with such phenomena? These issues may lie in a Pandora's box that one hesitates to open. Yet, there can be no denying the existence of believers who embrace Christ but are completely 'turned off' by the ceaseless squabblings that go on within churches, not to mention the amount of spiritual deadness or corruption which they find therein.

That there is also a tradition of 'solitary spirituality' within religious traditions into which such believers can readily tap or with which they can identify cannot be doubted. Such names as Sadhu Sundar Singh and Pandita Ramabai, both deeply devout individuals who never allowed themselves to become aligned with any single Christian denomination or

ecclesiastical system—whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Evangelical—serve to exemplify this tendency and certainly seem to reflect traditions that are profoundly Indian. While many questions, especially theological questions, remain unanswered or have not yet been asked in a satisfactory way, much less from a thoroughly biblical or theological perspective, doors to what may lie ahead certainly are open to further investigation.[47]

That said, there also is no denying the pervasiveness of Christian cultural, ethical, and moral values within a large segment of Indian society, especially on a nationwide level, among the English educated and professional, as well as military and civil services. This is somewhat ironic if not prophetic—at least in the sense that this fact seems to represent both the 'downward filtration' and the 'upward fulgent' aspects and contingents and legacies of foreign missionary influence in the building of the higher educational systems in India. Another irony can be noted: that much of the modern Indian English literature has decried 'colonialism' and 'missionaryism', often ignorantly and sometimes mistakenly lumping them together and conflating them as if, in the Hindutva sense, both were cut from the same cloth and both were alien imports that had polluted Indian culture. Still they cannot help but betray, if not reflect, Christian roots of those influences from whence much such literature itself has sprung. In this respect, they resemble the 'Post-Christian' West, especially in Europe and within the upper crusts of American culture. Interestingly, with the West, many of them share a left-wing and socialist, and even Marxian, bias. But then, one is reminded that, in some respects, Marxian idealism itself sprang from Judaeo-Christian roots—and has long been recognized as a non-theistic 'Christian' heresy. That various Christians and Marxists found common ground supporting India as a secular state, even banding together within the United Progressive Alliance in order to overthrow Hindutva regimes in 2004, is hardly surprising. The same kind of thing happened fifty years ago when Telugu Baptists, asked why they joined the Telengana Movement and why they voted Communist, replied that both Baptists and Communists shared the same economic and social agendas—namely, removal of caste discrimination and poverty. That there might be a polarity of doctrinal differences between theists and atheists seems rarely if ever to have been mentioned.

Finally, it is important to note that there is no single Christian culture, movement, or trend that has not found root in India. Thus, beyond the traditional kinds of mendicant *gurus*, India has produced its own kinds of charismatic versions of 'Billy Graham'. Some hold worldwide campaigns

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[47] Herbert J. Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity* (Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute [APTS], 1991; 2001).

that replicate those of the famous evangelists, or tele-evangelists, of America. Within India, campaigns of D. G. S. Dhinakaran,[48] Healer-Prophet, typify a genre of popular preaching that has attracted ever larger multitudes. Some, like their counterparts in America or elsewhere, are charlatans and mountebanks, who emotionally exploit and lead astray the blind and the gullible. Others have gained enormous respect and attracted worldwide followings. One such leader is Ravi Zacharias.[49] Coming from a Thomas Christian heritage, he is highly educated and combines the charisma of a Billy Graham or Billy Sunday with the learned appeal of a John Stott. The legacies of Mother Teresa or Amy Carmichael remind Christians of India of spiritual giants from abroad who, in their hundreds and thousands, gave their lives to India.

[48] Michael Bergunder, ' "Ministry of Compassion": D. G. S. Dhinākaran—Christian Healer-Prophet from India', in R. E. Hedlund (ed.), *Christianity is Indian: The Emergence of an Indigenous Community* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 158–74.

[49] *Jesus among Other Gods* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000; 2001).

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GLOSSARY: SELECT COLLECTION OF TERMS

achārya: title of a learned Brahman, highly advanced in classical Sanskriti/Vedic lore.

achuta: polluted, unclean, or untouchable.

adālat: Court of Justice. *Sadr- Adālat*: 'High Court' (Mughal, or Persian)

Adi-Drāvida : aboriginal or original Dravidian people –

Adivāsi : aboriginal, or aboriginal people. Earliest peoples of India.

ādvaita: 'non-dualism'; philosophy identified with Śankara and four derivative lines of successors, known as Shankaracharyas, and with Śaiva religious traditions.

Afghan: A person living in Afghanistan; or, more precisely, a belonging to a **Pushtu** (or *Pathan*) speaking tribe in borderlands along the northwest frontier**.**

Āgama/s: 'that which has come down': non-Vedic, or post-Vedic texts, handed down by Śaiva traditions or communities, pertaining to Vellalar (Valalan) Tamil Śaiva Siddantha sects.

agrahāram : Brahman held tax-free agrarian lands, settlement or village; Brahman quarter.

āhimsa (ā-himsa): non-violence; *himsa* (violence).

Aksai Chin: Snowbound *Ladakh/Kashmir* pass connecting China (Central Asia and Tibet.

'ālim: A rational or 'wise' man learned in the *Sharia* (Sacred Law of Islam).

al' Hind : The Indo-Islamic World (aka Indo-Islamicate)

Amadiyah: A religious movement seen as an unacceptable or wild by Sunnis or Shi'as.

amin, also *amin-tahsildar*: subordinate police magistrate (also often linked to revenue collector). Also see: *tahsildar*.

amir: commander, chieftain, prince, ruler or sovereign.

anandarāvan: designated heir apparent or successor to Thomas Christian bishop (*metrān*).

anantha (aka *anant, ananth*): "infinite, endless" in Sanskrit. This transcription is masculine form (of Hindu deity Vishnu) and feminine (of goddess Parvati).

Andhra, Andhra Pradesh : Telugu-speaking area, State (named after ancient regime).

Anjumān Anjunānnam : (fr. Persian): assembly, association, guild (eg. Jewish guild in Kerala/Malabar).

Arakan: Coastal mountain range running down Burma coast from India into sea.

Aranyaka- s: forest books or contemplations, following *Vedas* and *Brahmanas*.

*Aravāli/*s: Hill or mountain range that, with *Vindhiyas*, separate North from South India.

Arkan: Five 'Pillars' of Islam. Each pillar is called '*Rukn*': -

   1 *Kalima; Shahzādah*: Declaration of Faith C The Single Most Basic Requirement of Islam.

     '*La illahā illā Allāh, Wah Muhammad Rasul Allāh*!!'

     'There is no God but God! Muhammad is His Messenger!'

2 *Salāt & Namāz* : Prayer: – face down five times a day towards Mecca.

3 *Sawm & Roza* : Fasting : especially Month of Ramadan, ending with *d* Festival.

4 *Zakat*: Alms Giving: – 2.5 percent of income.

5 *Hajj* : Pilgrimage to Mecca: – At least once in a lifetime.

*Aryan/*s: Also see, *Indo-Aryan*. lit.: 'noble', peoples or races that, migrated into India, via passes in northwest, founded Vedic Civilization, and looked down of servile '*dasya*' peoples, a view challenged by Hindutva advocates of indigenous origins.

Aryavartha: "Land of the Aryans'' (*c.*1500–2000 BC); aka *Bharatvarsha,* land of Aryan tribe of the Bharats one Aryan tribe.

arzi: (P.) petition; presented to court, government, or ruler.

ashraf: plural of *sharf* or *sharif*: elite, honourable, noble, respectable, or revered (Muslim).

āshuddam: impure, non-pure, polluting, hence 'untouchable.' See: *shuddi*.

Assam: State within India; located in Brahmaputra river valley in far Northeast; centre of Sanskriti civilization, culture and kingdoms.

ātma: soul: essence of self that is eternal, real, as distinct from illusion (*maya*)

āvarna: "colourless'' (invisible) or polluting castes or communities. See: *varna*.

avatār: lit.: 'incarnation', normally of a deity.

Ayyangar (aka *Iyengar*, also variously spelled): a Tamil Sri-Vaishnava Brahman. See: *Ayyar*.

Ayyar (aka *Iyer*), variously spelled: a Tamil Śaiva (or Smartha) Brahman, as distinct from an *Ayyangar* (aka *Iyengar*, also variously spelled): a Tamil Sri-Vaishnava Brahman.

Bahadur: 'valiant'; an honourific title bestowed upon an high officer of State.

Bahai: a religious movement, originating in Persia, viewed as heretical or 'wild' (*be-shar*) by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Substantial numbers are found in the Punjab.

bahujan: oppressed person or persons. See: *dalīt*.

balikashram: home for child widows, or for destitute women. e.g. *Ananth Bali-kashram*.

baniya, *banya*: businessman, banker, merchant, shopkeeper, trader (usually *Vaishiya*).

Banjara: wander community (or tribe) of gypsies; transporters of goods across country.

baraka, or *barakat*: blessing, spiritual power; sacred relics conveyed (*tabarrakat*).

Bengal: Province or region of eastern India that ends at the sea (or Bay of Bengal).

badhralok: elite, gentry, honourable, notable or respectable people (Bengali; Brahman).

bhakti: devotion, devotionalism, devotional worship. *Bhakti-mārg*: 'path of devotion.'

Bhangi/s: Hindi speaking *Āvarna* or *Dalīt* community in North India (mainly in Uttar Pradesh).

Bharatvārsha: land of the Bharata, one of the original Aryan tribes. Cf. *Aryavartha*

Bhils: Tribal people in the western side of Central India (Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh). See: *Khonds/*aka 'Gonds' who occupy hills jungles of eastern India (Orissa, etc.)/

Bolan: pass between Quetta and Kandahar in Afghanistan. Also see: *Khyber*

Brahman (*Brahma/Brahman*); 1. All (all) that exists or is permanent; existence/ultimate changeless timeless reality; Cosmic 'Breath' or 'Sound'; 2. person of highest birth (*jāt*); caste lineage (*jāti*) belonging in highest class/ category/'colour' (*varna*), or highest ranking of 'twice-born' (*dvija*) beings. (popular spelling: *brahmin*).

Brahmana-s: Commentaries on *Vedas* that are followed by *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*.

Brahmaputra: river, rising in Tibet, that runs down the full length of the Assam Valley and empties into the Bengal Delta (*Sundarbans*).

Cańkam (aka *Sangam*): Classical Tamil literary tradition, arising from the 12 *ālvār* and 63 *nāyanmār* devotees who sang praises to Vishnu and Śiva.

Chagtai: Turko-Mongol language, rulers of India, especially Mughals.

Chakkaliyar, Chakkariyars : 'skinners', 'leather-workers'; with *Paraiyars* and *Pallars*, one of three main Tamil-speaking outcaste, untouchable communities ;an *Āvarna* community now self-described *Dalits*. Comparable, or similar to, Telugu-speaking *Madigas*.

Chambal: rugged country of 'badlands' and ravines lying athwart Hindustan and Deccan.

Chamār/s: Hindi speaking *Āvarna* or *Dalīt* community in North India (e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar).

Chandra-vamsha: royal lineage of the 'moon'; vs. *surya-vamsha*: lineage of the sun.

chatur-vārga: 'tetrad': four destinies/ends of mankind: 1. *dharma*: order/righteousness; 2. *ārtha*: power/wealth; 3. *kāma*: desire/pleasure; 4. *moksha/mukti*: freedom, escape from karma, absorption into cosmic Brahma.

chakra (*chhakra*): wheel (spoked wheel), as distinct from circle or sphere (*mandala*). See: *maha-chakra* (great wheel), a symbol of empire.

Charakipujar aka *chharakkiipujāri*: hook-swinging ritual or worship.

chatra (*chhatra*): parasol or umbrella: symbol of royal sway. Also *maha-chhatra-pati* ('lord of the great umbrella').

chatri: architectural embellishment on an Indo–Saracenic building.

chattram (aka *chattiram*, or *choultry*): See *choultry*, or *caravanserai*.

Chatur-Veda: 'Four Vedas' that at are of *Smriti* authority: namely *Rg veda*}, from whence come the *Samaveda, Yajurveda*, and *Arthavaveda*. see: *Smriti vs. Shruti*.

chela: disciple of a *guru*. See: *shishiya*.

cheri: 'ghetto'; quarantined quarter, or hamlet for outcastes or polluting people, on outskirts of proper village. See: *pallam*.

Cherrapunji: In Khasi Hills, this is the 'wettest place on earth' (1,100 inches of rain).

Cheruman Perumal: Chera Emperor, that last of whom allegedly disappeared in 827 A.D.

chevralu: signature; 'by the hand of'.

chobdars: 'mace-holder', or usher, who goes before a VIP or serves a *durbar* (*darbar*).

choultry (aka *chattram, chattiram*): 'guest-house' (sometimes for designated community), often held on *inām* or 'tax-free' tenure (as a charitable institution). aka: *caravanserai*.

Chuhra/s: Hindi & Punjabi speaking *Āvarna* or *Dalīt* community in North India (U.P. & Punjab).

Coromandel: from 'Chola-mandalam', spheres lying along the south-eastern coast.

crore: ten million: 10,00,00,000.

dacoit, and *dacoity*: bandit, and banditry.

daftar: 'records'; *daftardar*: 'recordholder or keeper'; '*daftarkhana*': 'record office'.

Dakshinapatha: lit. 'paths [or lands] on the right (or south)': root for word 'Deccan', the huge wedge-shaped plateau leading through central India to the south.

danda: 'rod', 'staff', 'sceptre'; *Danda-Niti*: classical principles of force, political theory.

–dar. lit. 'holder' of something; suffixed to many functions or titles: e.g. '*sardar*'.

darbar (*durbar*): formal, public audience, assemblage before ruler, a royal court.

Dari: Afghan form of Persian, as distinct from modern *Farsi* spoken in Iran. Persian was the language of Turkish and Mughal administration.

darshan: meritorious 'viewing', 'looking at' deity and/or divine royalty.

dar-ul-Harb (Persian–Urdu) vis. [*dar-al-Harb* (Arabic)]: 'Abode of War ('House of Rebellion') against Islam.

dar-ul-Islam (Perso–Arabic, Urdu) vis. [*dar-al-Islam*: (Arabic)]: 'Abode of Peace' (aka 'House of Submission') with Islam.

das: servant, slave; *dasi*: female servant or slave.

dāsya (*dāsiya*): 'ignoble', 'menial', or 'servile' peoples, as distinct from 'noble' (*ārya*). See *Āryan*.

Deccan: plateau tableland of central India, between Eastern and Western Ghats (Mts.), south of Vindhya Mts. and Tapti R., and Tungabhadra R.. sloping eastward. See: *Dakshinapatha*.

Delhi (aka *Dhilli*): Historic seat of power and rulership, lying between Hindustan (Uttarpradesh) and Punjab; where ruins of 14 cities includes ancient Indraprastha and capital of imperial and national India has been located since 1911.

dēsh and/or *dēshi*: 'country' or 'land'; hence 'of the country'; 'country language' vs. *margi*.

dēshanthar (*dēśanthar*): 'pilgrim' ; one who goes on a *sannyās* or *yātri* – pilgrimage.

deva: and *devi*: *Deva,* male deity or god, as distinct from *devi*, a female deity or goddess. *devadasi*, a 'female servant/slave/wife of god' (temple 'dancing girl' or 'courtesan', occasionally assumed to be a prostitute). *Mahadevi*, great–goddess (avatar of Kali, Durga, Bhowani, etc, and hundreds of thousands of village goddesses).

devasthān (aka *devasthānam*): agrarian domains, estates, holdings, lands belong to a 'male deity' or temple residence of that deity.

dharma and *Dharma*: duty, generic law, order, religion, rightness. Suffix specific to each person, function, or place. Also: cosmic. global or universal Order or Law or Religion. As flip-side of cosmic Causation (*Karma*), see: *karma /Karma*.

dharmakarta: Brahman administrative functionary, manager or officer of a temple. Another officer: *stanikar*: Brahman temple manager.

Dhimmi (aka *zimmi*): 'protected subject': unbelievers under 'protection' of *dar-al Islam*.

Diamper: Portuguese corruption of name for *Udayamperur*. See: *Udayamperur*.

din: 'faith' in Islam; *al-Din*: 'the faith'

Diwāli: Festival of Lights; along with *Holi* and *Dasara*, one of the major festivals.

diwān: royal counsel or court, minister or tribunal of state for revenue affairs (which sits on bench below a throne).

Drāvida [and *Dravidian*]: A non-Aryan (if not pre-Aryan) culture, civilization, and/or languages (Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Telugu) concentrated in the southernmost India, stemming from classical Tamil culture and peoples.

dubash, dubashi: lit. 'two-language' agent, interpreter, minister and/or specialist.

dvaita: dualist philosophy adhered to by disciples and successors of Madhavācharya.

dvija: 'twice-born' – any male of pure birth/caste who has undone the *upanayana* ceremony at age 8; a ceremony only allowed to boys from castes (*jati*-s) of pure birth (*jat*) or true 'colour' rank (*savarna*).

fakir: a sufi 'mendicant', like a *darwesh,* is someone 'poor'.

farangi : European (from 'Frank'). See: *parangi*, or hence: *pfarangi*.

Ismailis: Part of Shi'a Islam; 'Seveners'; Fatmid dynastic rulers, Agha Khans, etc. See: *Shi'a*.

fatwa: 'opinion' pronounced by a Muslim authority (e.g. *mufti*) on a point of law.

fitna, fitvā: (Arabic, Persian, Marathi): Casting off allegiance; division, rebellion, resistance, sedition, subversion, strife, struggle against authority.

fiqh: discipline of 'jurisprudence' for elucidation of the *shari'at*; body of rules for same.

gadi or *gaddhi*: regal pillow, or 'throne' on which or against which a monarch sits or reclines.

Ganga (aka *Ganges*): Sacred river originating in Tibet, flowing down plain and merging with the Brahmaputra as it empties into a delta (*Sundarbans*) at the Bay of Bengal. Each river, being sacred, is the *avatār* of a female goddess.

ghāt / s: lit., 'step' / 'steps': descending to any sacred river or temple tank; also mountains on eastern and western flanks of coast plains and the Deccan.

ghee: clarified liquid butter (that does not spoil); *ghur*: sugared lump/s of molasses.

Godāvari: river rising in Western Ghats and emptying in Krishna-Godavari Delta in the Bay of Bengal.

Gondwana: wilds of Central India long occupied by *adivasi* Gonds (aka Khonds).

gopuram: a large temple tower gateway; one out of four such gateways (in cardinal directions)

gotra: 'cowshed'; defining boundary of family; inhabitants of a family dwelling.

grama: generic village, of which there are hundreds of names for sub-types.

Gujarat: region or state on west coast, between Maharastra and Sindh.

hadis (aka *hadith*): sayings or traditions of the Prophet Muhammed.

Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca, enjoined upon the faithful; *hajji*: someone who done *hajj*. See: *Arkan*.

hallāl: genuine, honest, 'honourable', pure, and/or true; as distinct from *harām*. Often used in connection with *namak*: 'salt' – as in '*namak-hallāl* vs. '*namak-hallāl*'.

harcarrah: secret agent, intelligence agent (spy), informer.

Hijra (*Hijrāt:*): withdrawal of Islam's Prophet from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD.

Himalaya/s : lit. 'Home of Snows': name of an enormous chain of mountain ranges running across entire north frontier of Indian continent, from west of the Indus Gorge to east of the Brahmaputra Gorge. With parallel Karakoram range, it effectively separates India from Tibet.

Hindu: 1. anyone or anything native to India, or specifically, to Hindustan; 2. in modern times, anyone or any culture in India that is not Muslim or Christian; 3. any culture, institution or person that believes/embraces some form of Brahmanism, Hindutva and/or customs relating thereto, especially the caste system (*varnāshramadharma*).

Hindavi: someone of or from India, such as a *hajji* or traveller from India,

Hindu Kush: lit.: 'Hindu Killer': name for Mountain spine of Afghanistan, running from Pamirs and sinking into the 'Desert of Death' (*Dast-o-Marg*).

Hindustan: lit.: 'land beyond Indus' or 'land of Hindus' *Hindustani*: native of Indo-Gangetic plain; hybrid language of same area, blending of *Hindi* and *Urdu* (*Hindi-Urdu*).

Hindutva: 'Hinduness'; concept resurrected by V. D. Savarkar in his book *Hindutva*.

hundi: bill of exchange, in use since ancient times; some still in circulation.

huzūr: 'presence' of divinity, royalty, or authority. Any office or position or person of high authority.

ijmā: consensus within the Islamic *umma*, or among *ulema*.

ijtihād: enquiry or initiative to establish or expand understandings of Islamic *shariyat*.

Imām: 'Successor' Descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. (See: *Shi'a*).

iman: faith

inām: 1. endowment, gift, or reward: e.g. endowment to a deity or dancing girl. 2. land held rent-free, usually in hereditary and perpetual occupation. The author has counted 429 different and distinct kinds of *inām*, some tiny (village *maniam*), others enormous (temples can hold thousands of such grants).

Indian-English; Anglo-Indian; or "*Indish*": "Indianization" has brought thousands of Indian words into world-wide English usage. Examples: *khaki, bazaar, bungalow, divan, pajama, calico, muslin, jodhpur[s], thug, punch* (five finger fist; drink of five liquids).

Indo-Aryan: Languages, Cultures, common to North India, having common, Sanskriti (and/or Indo-European) roots, from which modern languages of North India come.

Islām: 'Submission' to Allah, or 'Peace' with God.

Ismailis: See: *Shi'a*, 'Seveners'; community under, under Agha Khan; Fatmid rulers over Islamic lands).

izzat: honour, credit, respect, reputation (e.g. 'face').

jāgaram: group action, campaign, demonstration, protest, &c.

jajmān: jajmani: person or system for exchange of goods and services in village economy.

jama: gathering; *jamabandi* ('rent gathering roll'); *jamamasjid*: 'Great Gathering Mosque'.

jama-masjid: a great mosque ('gathering mosque').

jāti: 'persons of common birth (*jāt*) and/or blood': a single endogamous 'caste' consisting of several lineages who share a common 'nature' and often, a common kind of 'skill' or 'work'.

jawābnavis: 'back-writer', correspondent, reporter (or spy). See: *harcarrah* (intelligence agent).

jihād: 'struggle', war against unbelief/unbelievers; *mujāhidin*: someone who engages in *jihād*.

jizya: capitation tax levied on *kafirs*: male non-Muslims, in lieu of service to the realm.

Jamna (*Yāmuna*), aka *Jumna*: Tributary river that merges into Ganga at Allahabad.

kachcheri (aka '*cutcherry*'): government office.

kafir-s: unbeliever infidel; someone who does not submit to Islam.

kala-pani: 'black-water' (euphemism for ocean or sea).

kalāri-pāyat: ancient martial arts of the Cheras, or Kerala. Confined to warrior-class.

Kāli: Female deity (from her Black complexion); consort of Shiva. Her forms include: *Durga*, *Parvati*, *Chandi*, *Bhowani*, *Mahadevi* (Great Goddess), *Mahashakti* (Great Shakti), together with hundreds of thousands of local, village goddesses.

Kalima (aka *Shahzādah*): Declaration of Faith. See *Arkan:*
> '*La illahā illā Allāh, Wah Muhammad Rasul Allāh*!!'
> 'There is no God but God! Muhammad is His Messenger!'

kanakkapillai : accountant, record-keeper, in Tamil-speaking community or village.

Kanāyi: place in Iraq (Mesopotamia), near Babylon from when Thomas of Kanāyi came.

Kanya Kumāri : Cape Comerin − extreme tip of continental peninsula.

karma: causation, consequence, destiny (determinism): − logically integral in linkage to *dharma*, which is its flip-side. Every action has both *dharmic* and *karmic* consequences see: *dharama*.

karānavar: 'elder' among Syrian or Thomas Christians.

kathā: epic; poetic rendition (classical, formal, poetic, etc).

kattanār (*kathanār*): Thomas (Syrian) Christian pastor or priest.

kāvalgar, *kāvalakkaran* (*kāval*-holder): petty war-lord of a domain (*kāval*), subject to *palaiagar*.

Kāveri (aka *Cauvery*): River that feeds ancient irrigation systems of Thanjavur Delta.

Khalipha: (A Deputy to the Prophet); *Khaliphāt,* or '*Caliphate*' (Institution, Authority or Regime of a *Khaliph*).

Khalsa: 1. household (royal) of Mughal rulers, with its administration and lands. Sometimes also known as *haveli*; 2. Sikh community in the line of the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh.

Khāsi Hills: mountain ranges lying between Assam Valley, and Manipur.

Khonds (aka *Gonds*) : Adivasi tribes located in eastern regions of Central India. See: *Bhils*.

khutba: Friday sermon in mosque, in which sovereign ruler is named and legitimized

Khyber: pass over mountains linking Peshawar with Kabul, via Jallalabad

Kirthar: range of mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan (& Indian continent).

Kodungallur (aka ancient *Muziris*, or modern Cranganore). Ancient seaport of Kerala.

Konkan: mountainous coastal region north of Malabar, between Eastern Ghats and Sea.

kotwal and *kotwali*: 1. lit. holder of a fort ('*kot*' or '*kotta*'); 2. subordinate police; 3. local police-station.

koyil : temple (*ko-il*: king's house), residence of royal deity. Also see: *pagoda*.

Krishna (aka *Kistna*): eastward flowing river that joins Godavari river in delta at ocean; name of major deity (avatar of Vishnu).

Kshatriya: class/colour/rank (*varna*: red) of castes – lords, warriors, and princes, & rulers.

kshetra: a sacred place – e.g. a temple or a locale of some important religious/sacred event.

kulin (aka *kulina*): member of common kin-group, family; people of common lineage.

kuravanci: a genre of popular Tamil dance-drama where a man of bird-catching caste (*Kuruvan*) loves of woman of the same caste who is a fortune-teller.

Kushanas: dynasty (aka people) entering India in ancient times, after Indo-Greeks

Ladakh: small Buddhist principality in or to far northwest of Kashmir.

lakh: a hundred thousand: 1,00,000; ten million (1,00,00,000) is a *crore*.

lāthi, lathiwallah: staff, quarterstaff (usually brass-bound bamboo); staff-wielder. See: *tadi-kambukarar*.

Lahore: capital of Punjab since early Indo-Turkish and Mughal times.

langarkhana (aka *lungarkhana*): a place for the sick (or hospital).

madrasa: (aka *madrassah*): mosque (Muslim) school or college; place for learning the Quran, *Hadith*, and *Shariyah*.

Madhya Pradesh: formerly known as 'Central Provinces', it is now a state in central India.

maha– –: adjectival prefix meaning 'big' or 'great'. See following terms.

mahal: palace, or great house; *muhalla* is a quarter or compound of a community.

mahadevi: 'great goddess' – The Great Goddess. See: *Mahashakti, Kali, etc.*

mahājan: lit. 'big person': hence, of the gentry, or a respectable person,

Mahanadi: eastward flowing river that empties into delta of Orissa.

Mahar: Marathi speaking member of *Āvarna* or *Dalīt* community in western India (Maharashtra).

Maharashtra: large Marathi-speaking state on west coast of India.

Mahashakti: great female deity energy. *Śiva's* consort: dynamic power. See: *Maha-devi,*etc.

mahātma: great soul.

Makalu : one of the highest mountain peaks of the world.

Mākran: mountain range on western edge of Pakistan (or continent) in Baluchistan.

Malabar: southeast coastal plain, lying along Eastern Ghats, in what is now Kerala

Malankara: place, perhaps island in lagoon near *Kodungallur* (Cranganore) where St. Thomas is alleged to have landed and founded the first of seven churches.

Malayālam: ancient language of Malabar (aka Kerala), derived from classical Tamil.

malpān: Thomas Christian teacher, mentor, or professor.

mamool: custom

mandalam: 'circle' or 'sphere'; *maha-mandalam*: 'great circle'; *maha-maha-mandalam*

mandala-nyaya: 'logic of spheres' *vs. matsya-nyaya*: 'logic of fish': dialectical logic of power in ancient political theory.

mandir: temple.

Mānigrāmmam : medieval trade guilds in southern India. including Christians or Jews. (Other, perhaps competing guilds were known as the *Ayyavole*).

manisha: generic or primordial 'mankind', including both noble and pure as well as impure.

mantampam, or *Muntapum*: central ceremonial many-pillared hall of a temple, outside the so-called sanctum sanctorum or inner locus of the image of a deity.

mantra: chant, incantation, invocation, prayer, ritual tapping into cosmic, mystical power.

Manu: archetype/progenitor of (Aryan) 'First Man'; compiled/ taught *Dharma* heard from Nārayana when world began: 'Laws of Manu' (*Mānavadharmaśastra*); *manusha*: generic mankind.

Manu-smriti or *Manavar Dharmashastra*: Code or Institutes of Manu, based on Vedas.

Māppila (*Māppillai* aka '*Moplah*'): Now commonly Malayāli Muslims of Malabar (Kerala), the term previously included *Nazarāni* (Christian) and *Nair Māppilas* ('great'–'child'[male]).

mārg (*mārga*): classic 'way' or 'path' of discipline (*yoga*). *mārga-s*: three disciplines: 1. *gnana-yoga:* logic/reason; 2. *karma-yoga:* action; 3. *bhakti-yoga:* devotion (emotion, spirituality)

Marāthwada: country inhabited by Marathas, or Marathi speakers (now State of Maharashtra).

masjid: mosque (place of gathering for prayer, preaching, and worship).

masnād: princely or royal throne (Persian, Urdu); *masnād mu'allah* (Exalted Throne).

matsya-nyaya: 'logic of fish' (political theory: fish to smaller fish east, & so ad infinitum).

mawāli: a non-Arab Muslim within the Islamic *Khaliphāt* (of Damascus and/or Baghdad).

māya: 1.divine (*śakti*) creativity; 2. illusion/delusion – that which is ever-changing/ impermanent.

mela: a festival, sometimes huge, held regularly (e.g. Kumbh Mela); aka *tirnāl*, etc.

Melpakkathar: 'Eastside people', party of Tamil Christians that broke away in Tirunelveli.

meriah: human sacrifice among Khond (aka Gond) peoples.

metrān, and high *Metrān*: Thomas (or Syrian) Christian Metropolitan bishop, or lesser bishop.

minār: minaret, or tower.

mirasidar : holder of a '*miras*': hereditary land or agrarian domain (all or part of village lands).

Mizo/s (aka *Lushai*): Aboriginal (*adivasi*) tribal, now largely Christian, located in northeasten India, in Lushai Hills south of Assam Valley, who rule state of Mizoram.

moksha (*mukti*): soul 'salvation': absorption, escape, freedom, release: 'salvation'

monsoon: lit. 'season'; two seasonal winds (Southwest & Northeast) that bring rains.

mufassal: interior of the country; outback; away from the '*huzur*' presence of authority.

mu'halla: an enclosed residential compound or quarter (of a community or noble family).

Muharram: Annual Commemoration of murders/massacres of *Shahids* (Martyrs) Hassan (669 AD) and Hussein (680 AD) at Karbala.

mujāhid (*mujahiddin*): person who engages in *jihād*.

Mukkavar: vs. *Paravar*. Seafaring shoreline fisherfolk, sailors (and one-time pirates) of Kerala, on western shore, as distinct from *Paravar* community on shoreline of Tamilnad.

mullah: teacher of law (*shariyat*), lore, and doctrines of Islam.

mūnshi : 1. under Mughals, and Company, a diplomatic agent, ambassadorial resident or representative; 2. in later times, a lowly language teacher, of Europeans or missionaries.

murid: a disciple of a *sufi pir* (guide, or master) or *sufi shaikh*.

murshid: see *pir* or *shaikh*.

murthi: a material form (or image) of a deity (aka, 'idol').

murtid: apostate from Islam.

Muslim: someone who submits to Islam and proclaim its prophet, Muhammad.

mutth /s (aka *matth /s* or *mattham /s*: 'monastic' institution, academy, usually attached to a temple.

Nāga/s: Member of one of 50 aboriginal (*adivasi*) tribes, mainly Christian, located in northeasten India, in Lushai Hills south of Assam Valley, who rule state of Nagaland; also, snake or serpent (cobra).

nagar, nagara or *nagaram*: city. Suffix examples: Ahmednagar, Vijayanagara.

Nair/s (aka *Nayar/s* or *Nayyar/s*): 'twice-born' warrior lords of Kerala who, by matrilineal descent, have Brahman (*Namboodri*, aka *Nambudhri*) mothers.

namak-hallāl: 'salt-true'; being 'true-to-the-salt'; faithful, loyal and true.

namāz: Islamic prayer. See: *salāt*.

Nārbada (*Narmada*): River flowing west through Gujarat into Arabian Sea.

nayaka: regional overlord or ruler subject the super-overlordship/emperor of Vijayanagara.

nawāb : deputy to the Mughal emperor (*padshah*), hence usually governor of province. Also: *naib*: an assistant, deputy or second in command to any higher officer.

Nazarāni, *Nazrani*: 'Nazarene', meaning 'Christian'; often applied to *Malankara Nazarānis*.

Padshah: Mughal Emperor.

pagoda: 1. a temple: from a *Pfarangi* (European or Portuguese) corruption of the Tamil '*periya-gūdi*' (or Telugu '*pedda-gūdi*': meaning 'big house' or important 'large residence' of a reigning/ royal deity (as also of a divine-royal being); 2. a small coin of pure gold (aka *hūn*), bearing image of deity (or temple): European name of coin that circulated in southern India prior to the silver *sicca* of Mughals.

Padroado Real: Portuguese Royal Patronage; shortened to *Padroado*; the ecclesiastical domains and dominion with India, under the Archbishop of Goa.

paisa: low value copper coin, or 'dub' (12 p. = *anna*; 16 annas = rupee).

palaiagar, palaiakkaran: powerful war-lord who is nominally subject to more powerful overlord or *nayaka* (regional ruler under imperial super-overlordship of Vijayanagara).

pallam, *palliam*: a segregated ghetto for 'outcaste' peoples – a quarantined hamlet for 'untouchable peoples'. See: *cheri,* among hosts of names for same kind of ghetto.

Pallar or *Pallan*: low, outcaste, 'untouchable' and 'left–hand' Tamil community, allied with commercial and artisan communities. Also see: *Chakkaliyar* and *Paraiyar*.

Panchama: 'Fifth' *Varna* ('Colour' category of castes); called '*Harijan*' (Gandhi); now *Dalīt*. See: *Āvarna*, and *Varna*.

panchāyat: governing 'council of five': usually for a village, or caste. Sometimes the head of these five (*sarpanch*) becomes virtual ruler, or *raja*; or vice-versa.

pandaram(*pantaram*): wandering mendicant, *sādhu*, or expert in magical or religious power.

pandit or *pundit* (fem. *pandita*): Brahman learned in language, law, religion and/or science.

panikkar: a Malayāli fencing master, swordsman, highly trained warrior: invariably of high caste, usually a Nair (Nayyar), but also possible a Thomas Christian.

Paraiyar, Paraiyan, or *Pariah* (*Parayar, Paraya, Berava*, or *Sambava*: outcaste, untouchable 'scavenger' (but also 'drum-beater'). Also see *Pulaiyar*, and *Dalit*.

peon: like 'pawn', an armed man, foot-soldier, perhaps less formally trained than a *sepoy*; now, commonly a lowly or menial servant or messenger.

Periyar: river that flows into the inlet (or lagoon) from Arabian sea at Kodungallur, or Cranganore (*Cranganur*), also ancient port of Muziris.

Perumāl: Chera (Kerala) emperor. See: *Cherumān Perumāl*. Aka name used for great/ high entities (e.g. 'great mountain').

Peshwa, *peshwa*: 1. one who bows to authority; 2. Chitpavan Brahman ruler of Maratha Confederacy/State, or ''*Swarajya*''.

phansigar (aka *thag*): 'strangler' linked to cultic ritual robber-cult of *thagi* (aka: *thuggee*).

Pillai: caste title, meaning 'child', ascribed of Vallalar lords and their descendants.

pinda: 'rice ball' shared by males of the same birth, blood, or family.

Prākrit [s]: regional language/s devolved from Sanskrit; *prakritization*: process of same.

prabhu: 'lord' or 'master'; husband on whose feet a wife puts her head, or gives *puja*.

Propaganda Fidé: *Congregation de Propaganda Fide*: Establish in Rome, in 1622, this was the papal instrument for establishing Catholic ecclesiastical authority in India, and for countering the influence of the *Padroado Real*.

puja: ritual, worship, etc.; *pujari* ; a *purohit*: a priest or someone who conducts *puja*.

Pulaiyar or *Pullaiyar*: lowly caste of polluting 'soil-slave' people of Kerala.

Punjab: 'land of five rivers' ('*panch-ab*'), between Delhi and Peshawar: Lahore is historic capital.

Purāna, *purāna*: class of legends, sagas, and pseudo-historical narratives; *sthala-puranas*: narrative of local, place or temple, having religious or sacred importance.

Puthankuttukar: 'New Party' of Thomas Christians; vis. *Pazhayakuttukar*: 'Old Party.'

Quran (*Koran*): 'Recitation' ('Recite' [Make Vocal] eternal words of God [*Allah*]) the sacred scripture of Islam.

qurbana: the name for worship or a worship service among Thomas Christians.

raj: 'realm' or 'rule'; *Raj*: British (aka Company or Crown) Raj: The Indian Empire.

raja: ruler or king; *maharaja*: 'great king'; {*pati*: lord}; {*swami* : lord, or guide}

raj-dharma: royal duty of righteous or orderly rule (the king's duty).

raja-guru: the guru of the ruler, often a Brahman *acharya*, who transmits spiritual & temporal lore.

raj-viti: 'royal–road' or 'royal–street'; 'king's highway'; also see: '*Puthu Theru*', 'New Street.'

rambān: archdeacon or administrative executive of (Syrian) Thomas Christian Church.

rani: fem. of *raja*; queen, female ruler. *maharani*: great queen, or empress.

rasika: a person with aesthetic taste, ability, appreciation, and knowledge of Carnatic Music.

rath yātra: procession of temple–car process, or circumambulation of temple/town domains.

Rigveda (*Ṛg-Veda*): first or original *Veda,* or source from when Sacred Knowledge came.

rishi: sage: often, if not usually, seen as originator of a lineage, or school of thought.

roza: Fasting. aka: *sawm*. See: *Arkan*.

'*rukn*': any one of the five 'Pillars' of Islam, collective known as *Arkan*.

sadan: home, residence, or shelter. e.g. *Sharada* (*Saraswati*) *Sadan* of Pandita Ramabai.

sādas: a cultural and/ or religious event, at which poets, musicians, and/or dancers perform.

sādhu: wandering ascetic, mendicant, or pious 'holy man' or 'religious practitioner' (aka *pandaram*), usually holding a begging bowl in one hand, and a staff in the other.

Sadr Adālat: Supreme/High Court (from Mughal/Persian/Urdu term), under Company Raj.

Śaka/s, or Shaka/s: Sythians who entered continent in ancient times.

sakhua: Mizo word approximating 'religion' or primal religion.

Salāt & Namāz: Islamic prayer: – face down five times a day; facing towards Mecca. See: *Arkan*.

samāj: society or association.

samasthān (aka *samasthānam*): large agrarian domain, estate of high/noble lord. See: *devasthān-am*.

sāmkhya (aka *sānkha*): one of six systems of philosophy (or *darshanas*).

sampradāya (*sampradāyika*): succession of separate doctrinal (denominational) or philosophical tradition, e.g. Shaiva(*Advaita*), Vaishava, Sri Vaishnava (*Visishta-advaita*), Madhava (*dvaita*), etc.

samsāra: 'bondage of life/rebirths' migration, transmigration, incarnation (see: *avatāra*).

sanad: charter, contract, grant, treaty (and other meanings).

sanātana-dharm: 'eternal, primeval order', 'old religion' (*dharma*), tradition. The term more commonly used before modern 'Hinduism' or 'syndicated Hinduism'

came into vogue. Contrasted to: *sadhārana-dharma* or 'common duty' – virtues that apply to all mankind.

Sangam: See *Cańkam*. Ancient schools of classical Tamil literature.

sangh: association, party, or union.

sanghatan: union, unity, unification; e.g. as organized by the an agency of Hindutva.

Sangh Parivar: organizations drawn together by common loyalty to Hindutva ideals.

sannyāsi (*sunnyāsi*): fourth stage (*āshram*) of life. Also, wandering hermit or mendicant. *Sannyasini*: female mendicant.

Sanskrit: Ancient, and/or classical ('Eternal') language of Aryans, Brahmans, and of *Vedas*; *Sanskriti* (or *Sanskritic*): term for anything Sanskrit; *Sanskritization*: process of turning non-Sanskritic and pre-Sanskritic cultures into cultures that are *Sanskriti*.

Santāl: aboriginal (*Adivāsi*), tribal people of eastern region (in Bengal and Orissa).

sāpinda: true descendents entitled to partake of same ball of rice (*pinda*), within a family.

sar-: lit. 'head' or 'chief': often, or usually, prefixed to many Persian titles.

sardār: officer, commander

sarkār: state, government, administration.

śāsanam: command, contract, order inscribed on copper, gold or stone, so as to last.

Sat-Śudra (*Sat-Shudra*): 'True', 'Pure' or 'Unpolluted' Sudra. Applied (by Brahmans) to former agrarian communities (*Vallallars, Velamas, Kammas,* etc.) who ruled in South India.

sati: 'true wife' who must be immolated on the funeral pyre of her diseased husband. Formally outlawed in 1827, occasionally still occurs, as a symbol of family 'honour'.

satya: 'truth'

satyāgraha: lit.: 'truth force': name given by Gandhi to civil disobedience campaigns.

saukar: – money-changer, money-lender, banker, entrepreneur (within village or town).

sawar /s: 'rider': armed horseman, cavalry trooper, as distinct from *sipahi*, *sepoy*: foot soldier.

sawm & roza : Fasting: especially Month of Ramadan, ending with *d* Festival. See: *Arkan*.

sayid (*said, sayyid, seyid, saiyed, &c*): 1. chief, lord, etc; 2. descendant of Prophet, via Ali and Hussain.

Sengunthar: 'Red-Dagger' people; and alternate name for *Kaikallar* (weaver community).

serra: uplands, hills or mountains (Easter Ghats) parallel to the Malabar coast.

servaikaran: military officer, captain of the guard, at the Saraswati Mahal, in Thanjāvur.

Shahzādah (aka *Kalima*): Declaration of Islamic Faith. See *Arkan* and *Kalima*:

shaikh : 'old one': leader or chief (or family, tribe, movement); *Sufi-shaikh* (Spiritual leader, guide, or *pir*).

Shāriyah: – body of Sacred Law: evolved out of precedent decisions of Mullahs or Ulema

Shāriyat: Path of Law/Reason vs. *Tāriqat*: Path of Mystery/Spirituality, aka Sufi *zikr*.

shakti (*shakti*): 1. divine dynamic power; 2. cosmic female power or cosmic deity (vs. *shakta*: male); *Mahashakti*: the Great or All Powerful (Female) Goddess (see: *mahadevi*), and her *avataras*.

Śastra, Shastra (*śastra*): Sacred Law, body of legal thinking derived from *Vedas*.

sishiya, shishiya : 'disciple'; more formal that 'chela'.

Shi'a (*Shi'at Ali*): 'Party of Ali'; epithet 'Splitter' or Schismatic: those believing that legitimate prophetic succession came through Ali and his sons, all of whom were 'martyred'. Religious successors of Ali are *Imāms;* and their institutional authority is known as an *Imāmate. Shi'as*, in turn, are split into successive branches and sub-branches:

(1). *Al-Sab=iyyah*: 'Seveners' − Succession of Imams ends at seventh; faithful await for the return or revealing of *Mahdi* or 'Hidden Imam'. Sample sub-branches:

    – *Ismailis*: Succession includes Fatmid rulers, Agha Khans, etc.
    – *Bohrahs*: 'Thursday' Shi's; converted commercial community in Gujarat.
    – *Khojahs*: Sat-panthi Imam-shahi Kojahs of Gujarat (1459−)

(2) *Ithna 'Ashariyah*: 'Twelvers' − Line of Visible Imams ends at Twelfth Imam.
    – *Imāmis*: 'Twelver' Shi'a Sect awaiting return of the 'Hidden Imām' or *Mahdi*.
    shrotriyam: a piece of tax-free '*inām*' land held by and for Brahmans for 'charitable', 'religious', or other common purposes.

sicca: coin struck in ruler=s name & linked to Kalima: legitimizing symbol of ruler.

silsilah: (lit. 'chain'). A Sufi Order, led by one Sufi Shaikh, or Pir (Saint), after another.

Sindh: semi-desert region at lower Indus and at delta mouth of Indus river.

sipahi (sepoy): 'strider', foot-soldier, infantryman, as distinct from *sawar*: a horse-soldier or rider.

Siwalik/s : foothill ranges (up to 5000 feet high) that run parallel to the Himalayas.

soma: ancient drink required for ritual sacrifice (in accord with Vedic requirements).

śraddha: 1. 'faith'; 2. funeral rite; 3. goddess.

Sruti : sacred knowledge (*Veda*) that is cosmically or divinely 'Heard' [analogous to 'Revealed'] in contrast to sacred knowledge that is merely 'Derived' (*Smriti*) − i.e. lore beyond the *Four Vedas* and their *Brahmanas, Aranyakas*, and *Upanishads*].

staticon: commission appointed by Catholicos or Patriarch of Babylon (Chaldea), Church of the East (East Syria), from Mesopotamia.

sthala-purāna(s): place-chronicles, place-histories.

suba, or subah: province of the Mughal Empire; *subahdar*: governor, usually referred to as *nawāb*, or deputy to the emperor (*padshah*).

śuddha (shudda) and/or shuddhi: 'pure' (symbolised by 'ashes') as distinct from āshuddi or 'impure' (polluted). Ceremony of purification, by wiping ashes across the forehead.

Śudra (pronounced 'shudra'): Fourth 'colour', class-rank of castes. See: *varnāshra-madharma*. Also: *Sat-Shudra*: 'clean', 'pure' or 'true' *Shudra*, applied mainly to high non-Brahmans (e.g. Velamas, Vallalars, etc.) in South India.

sufi: 'spiritual' outlook or person; sufism: *sufi tariqat* ('spiritual path').

sufi-shaikh: guide or leader, mentor, or revered saint of a sufi order.

Sufi-silsilah/s : ('Spiritual Chain/s'): – Sufi Orders, or Societies of Spiritual Discipline:

    Ba-shar silsilah: a legitimate or properly disciplined sufi silsilah (Order), e.g.:
- *Chishtiyah* (1195)
- *Suhrawardiyah* (1250)
- *Shattariyah* (1406)
- *Quadiriyah* (1482–1517:)
- *Naqshbaniyah* (1603)
- *Nizami* (1141–1209:)

    Be-shar: an undisciplined, wild sufi, or heretical sufi *silsilah* (order).

Sundārban/s: many mouthed Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta: jungled, mangrove, 'everglades' teaming with crocodiles (*muggers*), serpents, tigers, pirates and other wild life.

Sunni: Followers of *Sunnā* or 'Tradition' and of *Shariyā* (Sacred Law of Islam)

Sunnāt: institutional 'Path of Tradition' laid down by Prophet Muhammad and followed.

swami : title: 'lord', 'guide'; especially suffix on a name of a religious authority; aka: *swamulus*: itinerant and mendicant *sadhus* or *gurus*, or missionaries.

swaraj: 'self-rule'.

sutra/s: 'thread' of legal literature and manuals derived, for example, from Manu's laws.

tadi-kambukkarar: 'club-men': squads of strong-arm men, wielding 'clubs'. See: *lathiwallahs*.

tahsildar: holder of a '*tahsil*', 'bundle of revenue rolls'; officer in charge sub-district, or sub-sub-district – under a *taluk*, which is itself smaller that a *zillah* (district: in Madras Presidency, about 5,000 square miles, or about the size of Connecticut).

taluk (or *taluq*): subdivision of a district (*zillah*); *talukdar*: sub-magistrate/collector; *zilladar*: district officer, district magistrate, or collector-magistrate.

Tambraparni: river flowing through Tirunelveli and into the Gulf of Mannar.

tantra: magic power, practice, ritual (tapping into cosmic power). See: *shakti*

Tapti : river of Gujarat that, along with *Narbada* (*Narmada*), running parallel to Aravali and Vindhya hills that empties into Arabian Sea.

Tarispalli : Persian Christian (refugee) community in Malabar (ancient Kerala).

Tekkumbhāgar: 'Southist' or Malankara Nazrani (Thomas Christian); community of high, exclusive caste Jewish-Christians who migrated from near Babylon in 345 AD, under the leadership of Thomas Knāya, community distinct from *Vattakkumbhāgar*.

thālavan: headman, or leader; *talavar* (*talawaru*) : headman (headmen), or community/village.

tharavād: traditional ancestral home (or mansion) of landed gentry in typical Kerala style.

tinnaippallikūm: school; specifically a 'verandah school'.

tirtha: meaning 'water', a ritual 'bathing ghat', connoting a place of pilgrimage on the banks of sacred streams of water; or, within a temple, the sacred tank with ghats (steps) leading into water. Without water, be it river, lake, tank or well, there can be no *tirtha*.

tope: endowed tax-free (*inām*) land for grove of trees (provided for giving shade to travelers).

toti: lowly, menial, polluting coolie or labourer.

Trimurthi: 'triple-image' of deity (like trinity): e.g Brahma, Śiva, and Vishnu.

Udayamperur: one of seven Christian settlements credited to the Apostle Thomas.

ulema: An assembly of '*ālims*' who interpret and pronounce on precedents of *Sharia*.

Umma: Community of all who are faithful to Islam.

upadesiar: Tamil term for a local, territorial or 'parish' caregivers, elder or 'pastor'. aka: 'helper,'; 'pilgrim'; catechist' or 'head catechist'.

Upanishad- s: Philosophical works based on *Vedic* authority.

Vaishiya: Third Varna ('colour'), class-rank of castes. Also: *banya*. See: *varnāshramadharma*.

vakīl: 1. agent, especially legal agent; 2. later, an attorney, solicitor (as distinct from a barrister).

varna: lit., 'colour': a euphemism for a 'category' or 'class' of distinct peoples (castes); four *varnas* (*chaturvarniya*) make up *varnāshramadharma*. See: *varnāshramadharma*.

varnāshramadharma: *varna ashrama dharma* = 'colour-code/rank-order/system': – class/caste (social) system. Top three 'colours' are 'twice born' (*dvija*). Four categories are as follows:

(1) *Brāhman* class/colour/rank	(*varna*):	[white]
(2) *Kshratriya* class/colour/rank	(*varna*):	[red]
(3) *Vaishiya* class/colour/rank	(*varna*):	[yellow/gold]
(4) *Śudra* (pronounced *Shudra*):	(*varna*):	[black] Also see: *Sat-Śudra*

An unofficial fifth category that also existed:

(5) *Panchama* (class/rank):	(*āvarna*):	[colourless] aka: '*Harijan*' & '*Dalīt*'.

Vallalar: lords of agrarian society in Tamil country, ranked as *Sat-Śudras* by Brahmans; many other similar, high-ranking agrarian lords include *Velamas*, *Kammas*, *Gounders, etc.*

vamsha (*vamcā*): lineage; *vamshāvali*: lineage history, legends, or stories (genealogy).

Vattakkumbhāgar: 'Northists': community of Thomas Christians living north of the Periyar River, whose presence in India is older that that of the more exclusive 'Southists' (*Tekkumbhāgar*).

veda; *Veda-s*: 1. 'knowledge', 'sacred knowledge'; 2. ancient Sacred Knowledge from whence all Brahmanical or Sanskriti authority stems; 3. four (original) collections (*samhitas*) of poetic *mantras* that have '*Sruti*' ('Heard'[Revealed] Authority) by seers (*rishis*) at the beginning, as distinct from '*Smriti*' ('Remembered'/Derived Authority). The *Chatur-Veda* (Four Vedas) are: *Rg veda*}, from which come *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Arthavaveda*. Four intermingling streams of knowledge developed: namely, *Brahmana-s*: Commentaries; *Aranyaka-s*: 'Forest Books or Contemplations'; *Upanishad-s:* Philosophical Works.

Vedanta: 'End of the Veda's'; lore following '*chatur-veda*'; beyond *Smriti* ('heard' or most authoritative sacred lore) but including *Sruti* (volume of lore 'derived' from the 'Four Vedas' that are *Smriti*.

vibūthi aka *viboothi*: ashes symbolism of submission to Ultimate Deity, Shiva, or a local consort of Shiva (often linked with bhakti or devotion to Śiva).

Vindhiya/s: low, mountain range running each and west, separating north and south India, or Hindustan (Indo-Gangetic plain) from the Deccan.

vishishtha-ādvaita: qualified non-dualism; linked to Sri-Vaishnava *sampradaya* of Ramanuja, subdivided into *Vadagalai* (Northern) and *Tengalai* (Southern) schools.

jājna: ritual sacrifice (fire, flowers, fruit, etc) in religious worship (*puja*). Vedic sacrifice

yātra: procession, often circumambulatory. See: *Rath Yātra*: temple car/chariot process; or *pat-yatra*: 'foot–procession' or 'pilgrimage'

Yāvanas: Ancient Greeks or Indo-Greeks (hence Europeans of ancient times).

zakat: mandatory Muslim alms giving: − 2.5 per cent of income. See: *Arkan*.

zamindar (*zamin-dar*): lit. 'land-holder', can range from petty landlord to raja over many villages.

Zamorin: corruption of '*Samudra Raja*', or 'Lord of the Sea', who reigned in Calicut.

zanāna, *zenāna*: women's apartment, quarters, residence within house, compound or *muhalla*.

zillah (or *jillah*): administrative district within any larger domain of Raj, made of *taluks*.

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INDEX

Notes and plates are indexed in bold, e.g. 478**n**

Edmonstone, G. F. 298, 298n
education:
    Bengal 315
    Christian 222–4
    development of 314–20
    in English 307–14, 319, 320–7,
        333–6, 342
    evangelization 451
    government, role of 315–16, 318–20
    Indian officers 305–6
    Madras 311
    missionary 315, 325, 333, 334, 335,
        451, 456
    universal 222
Education Petition 321–2, 326
Ehrman, B. D. 2n
elites:
    Christians 380–1
        leaders 418; values 339
    colleges, missionary-run 336–7, 341
    dominant (*mahajans*) 335, 341–3
Elliot, E. 461, 461n
Elliot, J. K. 94n
Elliot, Sir W. 192n, 292, 329, 329n
Elliott, E. F. 331, 331n
Ellis, F. W. 175n
Elphinstone, J., 13th Lord 276, 282,
        282n, 321, 322, 328
Elphinstone, M. (Governor of
        Bombay) 306, 315
employment discrimination 274
Engineer, A. A. 481, 481n
Engineer, I. 481, 481n
England 112
    fleets 197
    missionaries 205
    Ramabai, arrival in 387–8
English 33, 309
    advanced training in 302
    Ao Nagas 439
    education in 307–14, 341–3
        upper-class 333–6
Enlightened One, *see* Buddha
Enlightenment 143, 145, 146, 148, 153,
        160, 167, 302, 339, 349, 478

equality 260, 308, 338
*Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians
        to Use Means for the Conversion
        of Heathens, An* (Carey) 323
Estado da India 18, 126, 131, 140,
        144, 345
ethnicity 74, 131, 206, 263–5, 307,
        376–7, 381, 457–8
Eucharist 96, 247, 258, 261, 377
Europe (*Pfarangis*):
    Arab conquests in 119
    Christendom in 1, 3, 12, 57
    Christians 120–3, 131, 183, 377
        political behaviour 243–4
    clergy 356
    fleets (Portugal) 119–26
    languages 33
    missionaries 129–30, 137, 253
Eusebius 103
Eutyches 368
Evangelical Christians 7, 17, 168,
        246, 412
    Gospel, interpretation of 214
    missionaries 145–6, 206, 214–15,
        224, 269–70, 355, 421, 464,
        483–4
    responsibility for others 214
    Lutherans 233, 260
    Pietism 6, 144, 153, 167, 227, 286–7,
        308, 465
Ewing, J. C. R. 412, 412n
Ewing, R. G. 447, 447n
excommunication 127, 363, 369,
        373, 374
exploration, *see* Portugal, exploration
*Exploring New Religious Movements:
        Essays in Honour of Harold
        W. Turner*
    (Walls and Shenk) 15

Fabricius, J. P. 151n, 152, 159, 165
family relationships 40–2
famine victims 400–2
Farquhar, J. N. 91n, 93n, 98n,
        339, 339n